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ROLLO'S WILD OAT

By CLARE KUMMER



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SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
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Rollo's Wild Oat

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By
CLARE KUMMER

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“ROLLO'S WILD OAT”

CAST

(In order of their appearance)

HEWSTON.....	<i>Rollo's Man</i>
LYDIA.....	<i>Rollo's sister</i>
ROLLO WEBSTER.....	<i>A youth with aspirations</i>
MR. STEIN.....	<i>A theatrical manager</i>
GOLDIE MACDUFF.....	<i>An actress</i>
GEORGE LUCAS.....	<i>An actor</i>
MRS. PARK-GALES	} <i>All of the profession</i>
WHORTLEY CAMPERDOWN	
THOMAS SKITTERLING	
AUNT LANE.....	<i>Rollo's great-aunt</i>
HORATIO WEBSTER.....	<i>Rollo's grandfather</i>
BELLA.....	<i>Housemaid at the Webster's</i>

(Mrs. Gales and Bella can double in the play. Also Horatio Webster and either Camperdown or Skitterling.)

ACT I

SCENE 1: *ROLLO's studio, Central Park West, New York City.*

TIME: *Twelve o'clock on a morning in early Spring.*

SCENE 2: *The same, the following evening.*

ACT II

SCENE 1: *ROLLO's dressing room, the Oddity Theatre.*

SCENE 2: *On the stage, that very moment.*

ACT III

SCENE 1: *Sitting room, GRANDFATHER WEBSTER's house, Shelbrooke. A few hours later.*

SCENE 2: *The same, the following morning.*

Rollo's Wild Oat

ACT I

SCENE 1: *A duplex apartment: a large studio, with a stairway, practical, and balcony which runs across rear of scene. This leads to ROLLO's bedroom. Below is swinging door leading into kitchenette. The room is artistically furnished. Contains a baby grand piano and some good chairs and a table. There are rugs hanging over the balcony and some tall Japanese jars containing artificial cherry blossoms. The effect of the room in color is gold and blue, and it is Japanese in character.*

AT RISE: *On curtain, door-bell buzzer. Enter HEWSTON from the kitchenette, pulling on his coat. HEWSTON is a very superior gentleman's gentleman—rather melancholy in appearance. He goes to door R.C.—admits LYDIA. She is an attractive girl of eighteen, smartly dressed. She enters briskly as though she had a right to be there.*

HEWSTON. Really, you should not have come up, Miss Lydia.

LYDIA. (L. of chair R.) I don't know what you

mean, Hewston, saying that I can't come up to my own brother's studio.

HEWSTON. (*R. of chair R.*) It's only that I had strict orders, Miss, not to let anybody up.

LYDIA. Well, a sister isn't anybody, Hewston—she is not included in such orders. (*LYDIA lays fur neckpiece on the piano.*) Please remember that in future. Where is my brother?

HEWSTON. Mr. Rollo is not up yet, Miss.

LYDIA. Not up!

HEWSTON. He was out late last night and he said he was going to have a very busy day and didn't wish to be disturbed before twelve.

LYDIA. (*L.C.*) A busy day! When is he going to begin to have it? You'd better wake him up, Hewston.

HEWSTON. No, Miss. I'm getting paid to carry out Mr. Rollo's instructions and carry them out I shall.

LYDIA. If he does pay you, Hewston, it will be out of the money Grandfather gave him to go into business with.

HEWSTON. As to that I can't say, Miss.

LYDIA. And do you think Grandfather would have given him the money if he had thought Mr. Rollo was going to leave home and come in town and take a studio and have you—and everything?

HEWSTON. As to that I can't say, Miss.

LYDIA. (*Sits C.R. of table C.*) Grandfather thinks it was a dreadful thing for you to do, Hewston, to leave us without a moment's notice. You know it's impossible to get anyone in the country this time of year.

HEWSTON. Yes, Miss. Don't think I have it so easy here. All there is to this place is what you see, and Mr. Rollo's bedroom upstairs. I've got no place

to sit when he has callers but the sink in the kitchenette. (*Buzz kitchenette.*)

HEWSTON. Mr. Rollo's tray.

(*Exit HEWSTON into kitchenette. LYDIA goes to piano and begins to play briskly.*)

LYDIA. (*Singing*)

I love to wander in the spring,
When tiny birds are darting high,
I love to wander in the spring,
And drink my fill—and drink my fill—
Of sun and sky.

(*ROLLO enters in dressing gown and slippers. He stands on balcony, looking down at LYDIA. She looks up. ROLLO is a rather serious young man of twenty-two or twenty-three.*)

ROLLO. If you love to wander in the spring, don't let me detain you. (*Comes down stairway.*) So I'm not safe from your persecutions even here.

LYDIA. Hewston said you were going to have a busy day—I thought you'd better begin.

ROLLO. Always thinking of others.

LYDIA. (*L.C. Leaving piano and coming to him with a coaxing smile*) Rollo, please don't be cross because I came.

ROLLO. (*R.C.*) I'm not cross—the utter hopelessness of getting away from my family depresses me, that's all. I'll feel better when I've had something to eat.

(*HEWSTON enters with tray.*)

HEWSTON. Will you have it down here, sir?

ROLLO. (*Sits R. of table*) Yes. Try and keep as many people out as possible while I'm eating my

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breakfast, will you, Hewston? (*As HEWSTON sets tray on table.*)

LYDIA. (*Sitting L. of table*) It wasn't Hewston's fault that I came up, Rollo. He told me not to! But I told the elevator man you expected me.

ROLLO. I hope you told him you were my sister.

LYDIA. No, I didn't. Should I have?

ROLLO. Hewston, you'd better step out and tell the elevator man it was my sister that came up. Just mention it casually, you know. Don't say that's why you rang for him.

HEWSTON. Yes, sir. (*Starts R. to door.*) What shall I say I rang for him to come up for?

ROLLO. Oh, anything. Ask him why the service is so bad at night when he's not on. That'll please him.

(HEWSTON *exits up R.*)

LYDIA. (*Eagerly*) Rollo, please tell me. What are you going to do with your money?

ROLLO. How's Grandfather?

LYDIA. He misses you dreadfully, Rollo, and so does Toby. Every time I go into your room he growls and barks so.

ROLLO. Grandfather? Oh, Toby—well, why do you go into my room?

LYDIA. Because I miss you, too.

(HEWSTON *enters, starts for kitchenette.*)

ROLLO. Isn't there some orange marmalade in the place, Hewston?

HEWSTON. I'll see, sir. (*Exits into kitchenette.*)

LYDIA. Grandfather gave me a check for exactly the same amount he gave you, to do what *I* liked with—wasn't it dear of him?

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ROLLO. Yes. Have you got it with you?

LYDIA. No. Fortunately, I haven't.

ROLLO. Well, it doesn't matter. I don't need it yet.

LYDIA. Rollo, you're really going to begin to sow your wild oats, aren't you?

ROLLO. My dear, I am going to sow just one oat. If it doesn't turn out right, I shall hand myself over to Grandfather and become interested in——

HEWSTON. (*Who has entered with jam*) Orange marmalade, sir.

ROLLO. Thank you, Hewston. You can find most anything in that kitchenette, if you take the trouble to look.

HEWSTON. You don't even have to trouble to look for a lot of things in there, sir. There's mice, too.

ROLLO. Thanks, I don't care for any.

LYDIA. One oat—— Tell me about it, Rollo.

ROLLO. How's Aunt Lane?

LYDIA. She's well. I left her at Wanamaker's.

ROLLO. Well, I hope she stays there.

(*Phone rings.*)

HEWSTON. (*At phone*) Mr. Stein—calling by appointment.

ROLLO. (*Importantly—rising*) Tell him to come up.

HEWSTON. (*Into phone*) Mr. Stein can come up. (*Exits.*)

ROLLO. (*To LYDIA*) I should say so—now you've kept me talking all this foolishness—I don't want to see him in this dressing gown.

LYDIA. (*Coming c.*) I'll see him. I'll tell him you'll be right down.

ROLLO. You will oblige me by going back to

Wanamaker's at once. (*He hurriedly exits up the stairs.*)

LYDIA. Hewston, you'd better take the tray.

HEWSTON. (*From outside in kitchenette*) Just a moment, Miss.

ROLLO. (*Off*) Hewston, where are my shoes?

(*HEWSTON, emerging from kitchenette, passes rapidly up the stairs with the shoes, containing shoe trees.*)

HEWSTON. Coming, sir.

LYDIA. (*After a moment's hesitation, goes to piano. Sings*)

"I love to wander in the spring,
When tiny birds are darting high.

(*Studio bell.*)

I love to wander in the spring,
And drink my fill, and drink my fill
Of sun and sky."

(*Bell rings again. LYDIA goes to the door and opens it, admitting MR. STEIN.*)

LYDIA. Come right in.

STEIN. (*Going R.C.*) I am calling to see Mr. Webster.

LYDIA. (*R. of STEIN*) Yes, I know. I'm his—er—secretary. (*She laughs a little, mischievously, then is serious.*) No, I'm not really—I'm his sister.

STEIN. (*Not believing her, smiles*) I am Mr. Stein—Miss—er—

LYDIA. Won't you take off your coat and put it somewhere?

STEIN. Thanks.

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HEWSTON. (*Coming down the stairs*) Let me take your coat. (*Takes STEIN's coat.*)

STEIN. (*To HEWSTON*) Mr. Webster?

LYDIA. (*Giggling*) No, that's Hewston.

(*HEWSTON exits with tray.*)

STEIN. I don't know him.

LYDIA. (*Crossing L.*) He's our—oh, well, it doesn't matter. Do sit down. I'll sit here. (*On piano bench.*) Are you fond of music, Mr. Stein?

(*STEIN follows LYDIA L. Sits L. of table.*)

STEIN. I don't mind it. I hear so much of it in my business I've got used to it.

LYDIA. What is your business, Mr. Stein?

STEIN. I am a theatrical manager.

LYDIA. A theatrical manager! It's a wonderful business, isn't it? To be able to make so much money and have so much fun at the same time.

STEIN. (*Looking a little dubious*) Are you a professional, Miss?

LYDIA. No, not yet. My grandfather is very much opposed to the stage.

STEIN. Oh, you've got a grandfather?

LYDIA. Yes, haven't you?

STEIN. I suppose I had one, but I don't know where he is.

LYDIA. I wish I didn't know where mine was. (*Both laugh.*) Oh, I ought not to say that. He's a perfect darling at times.

(*Enter ROLLO down the stairs with dignity.*)

ROLLO. Mr. Stein. Lydia, just a moment—
(*Takes her aside R.C.*) Wanamaker's!

ROLLO'S WILD OAT

(LYDIA takes her fur. STEIN bows. LYDIA makes a feint of going out, but slips up the stairs near the door and goes into ROLLO'S bedroom unseen.)

ROLLO. Won't you smoke? (*Offering cigarettes, which STEIN refuses.*) A cigar? (*STEIN assents. ROLLO looks for cigars in desk L.*) And then let's get down to business.

STEIN. Yes, that's a good idea—because I haven't got very much time. (*Goes R. of table.*)

(ROLLO finds cigars. STEIN takes one. Bus. of lighting. STEIN sits R. of table.)

STEIN. I was interested in your letter, Mr. Webster, because it is just between seasons, you see, and I might take an interest in something—if it was all right.

ROLLO. (*Puts cigars back in desk. Going L. of table*) Well, my proposition is very simple—no reason why we shouldn't understand each other from the start—if you are interested, all right—and if you are not, all right, too.

STEIN. (*Not quite pleased*) Well, Mr. Webster, the first thing I will say is—I've been in this business for twenty years and I confess I don't know anything about it.

ROLLO. (*Sitting L. of table*) I see. Well, do you think that is a good thing?

STEIN. Well, it is a fact. What I mean to say is, if I knew what would be a successful play, I'd never put on anything else, but I don't know. Nobody knows.

ROLLO. (*Politely*) I see.

STEIN. It's the public. You can't count on it. Give 'em something good and they'll go to see some-

thing bad. Give 'em something bad and they don't like that either.

ROLLO. I see. Well, of course, there's no trouble about my play. It's a great play and the critics will all like it.

STEIN. That's what they all think, Mr. Webster. No one ever wrote a bad play that knew it.

ROLLO. Well, I didn't write this play, and when I say it's good I mean it's a play the critics will respect—so there'll be no trouble with them. They may not like my acting, but they can't find fault with the play—at least, they never have.

STEIN. Oh, it has been played before. What is the name of it, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. (*Taking a cigarette*) Hamlet.

(*There is a muttered exclamation and light glass crash from the kitchenette.*)

STEIN. Hamlet. Do you think anyone wants to see it?

ROLLO. They always have. It's lived all these years.

STEIN. Lived—but how? You're making a mistake, Mr. Webster. If you've money to use in show business, take it from me, let Hamlet alone.

ROLLO. No, Mr. Stein, I can't let Hamlet alone, because he won't let me alone.

STEIN. I'm sorry I asked Goldie to meet me here.

ROLLO. Who is Goldie?

STEIN. She's a little girl has got a lot of talent, Mr. Webster. Dances and might make a hit in a girl show, you know.

ROLLO. (*Thoughtfully*) Oh!

STEIN. A very pretty girl.

ROLLO. Well, I'd like to see her. I've a lot of new ideas about producing the play—it's just possible I might use her.

STEIN. It ain't possible there's a Hamlet slipped by me, Mr. Webster. You're speaking of the old piece, ain't you, that's got "To be or not to be" in it?

ROLLO. Yes, "To be or not to be—whether 'tis better . . ."

STEIN. (*Rising*) I'm sorry, Mr. Webster, I wish I could do business with you, but I'm a man that don't like to see anyone throw their money away. Money is hard to get.

ROLLO. Not always. (*Phone rings. Enter HEWSTON from kitchenette.*) Hewston, some Scotch and soda.

HEWSTON. (*At phone. To ROLLO*) It's Miss MacDuff calling.

STEIN. It ain't worth while to let her up.

ROLLO. Oh, yes, if you don't mind, ask her to come up.

HEWSTON. (*Into phone*) Let the young lady come up, please. (*Exits into kitchenette.*)

ROLLO. I have leased a theatre.

STEIN. You have leased it? What theatre, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. The Oddity.

STEIN. But it ain't finished yet.

ROLLO. It will be when I get in it.

STEIN. (*Crosses to table and sits R. of table*) What are those new ideas you've got about producing, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. Well, extreme simplicity, in the first place.

STEIN. It's been done to death. Unless you've got some new kind. What do you mean by simplicity?

ROLLO. I would use the same set for every scene—just throwing on different-colored lights to give an effect of ghastliness, beauty, morning or evening, as the case might be.

STEIN. The same set for a bedroom or a jail?

ROLLO. Certainly. The text, the costumes, the lights tell the story.

STEIN. The costumes? People have gone to bed in a jail, you know, if they are unlucky enough.

ROLLO. (*Rising and crossing to R. of STEIN*) I know, but you never saw pink boudoir lights in a jail. Then I'd like to see a flight of steps leading down into the audience—and if at any time during the play some gifted auditor was moved to join in the performance, I'd like to allow it. I don't want to be separated from my audience.

STEIN. It's a good thing to be separated from them, Mr. Webster. It ain't the gifted ones usually that want to join in. I'm afraid those steps would lead to a general rough-house, especially with Hamlet. (*HEWSTON enters with Scotch and soda.*) Any more ideas, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. (*Crossing to L. of table*) Yes. With my very modern methods—perfect naturalness and simplicity—I would like to combine the old school in the other actors. Exemplifying the fact that Hamlet was a modern spirit—surrounded by old forms, old customs and traditions. All but Ophelia. I would have her just such a one as myself.

(*Door-bell buzzer.*)

STEIN. (*Rising*) You mean, have the part played by a man?

(*HEWSTON goes to door.*)

ROLLO. No, no. But modern, you know. Simple and natural.

(*HEWSTON opens door, announcing*)

HEWSTON. Miss MacDuff.

(Enter GOLDIE. *She is a girl of twenty-one or two, rather timid naturally, but brave as occasion may require. She is blond and has an expression of arch wistfulness. She is dressed in a plain blue serge tailor-made suit.*)

STEIN. How do, Goldie? This is Mr. Webster.

GOLDIE. I'm very glad to meet you. (*Gives him her hand.*)

STEIN. (*Dropping down R.*) I guess I got you here on a false alarm, Goldie.

GOLDIE. Really? (*Looking anxiously at ROLLO.*)

STEIN. Yes, Mr. Webster is going to play Shakespeare.

GOLDIE. Shakespeare? Oh——

ROLLO. Does that mean horror, or admiration, or what?

GOLDIE. Why, it doesn't mean anything—only that let's me out.

STEIN. If you'd 'ave come into my office yesterday, I could have put you into a nice little Revue—the Midnight Riot—a supper show, good money.

GOLDIE. You know I can't do those things.

ROLLO. Why?

GOLDIE. (*Surprised, looking at him*) It sounds so silly—I get sleepy about twelve o'clock. I'm used to going to bed early.

STEIN. Ain't that ridiculous? I never heard any one on the stage talk like you, Goldie. It's excitement keeps you awake—it's temperament, that's what does it. Ain't you got any?

GOLDIE. I don't believe so. I'm relieved, of course, after it's over, if I haven't done anything too dreadful, but that's all.

STEIN. And she's just made for it. Ain't it funny?

(There is a pause and ROLLO looks thoughtful.)

GOLDIE. I'm afraid we're taking Mr. Webster's time.

ROLLO. No, no, not at all. I was just thinking—*(GOLDIE eyes him nervously.)* In the play I'm going to do there is a very sweet, simple young girl, unhappy, you know—the way they usually are.

GOLDIE. Which play is it, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. Why—er—Hamlet!

GOLDIE. Oh, Hamlet!

ROLLO. Yes, Hamlet—nothing to be afraid of, you know. It was just his name—just the way Rollo is mine.

GOLDIE. Of course, only—

ROLLO. Only what?

GOLDIE. Rollo seems so different—so much nicer.

ROLLO. Awful name. I wouldn't have had it only my mother was so fond of reading—tell me, do you sing?

GOLDIE. Hardly at all.

ROLLO. Well, that's quite enough. Ophelia goes mad, you know, and sings.

GOLDIE. Well, I might do that.

STEIN. Mr. Webster, excuse me. Have I made a mistake? Is this the old Hamlet, or have you maybe made some changes in it? Have you made it into a musical show?

ROLLO. No, I haven't. Shakespeare put songs in it for Ophelia. Not exactly songs, but fragments.

STEIN. *(Interested)* Fragments!

ROLLO. I would like to hear you sing, but I can't play for you.

GOLDIE. Oh, I can play for myself. But I don't really think there's any use in it, do you?

ROLLO. Yes. I don't know of anything more important in the world! I don't think this piano is very good—but it has all the keys on it—please, won't you?

(ROLLO goes to piano. He plays a little. STEIN and GOLDIE down R.)

STEIN. I believe this fellow's a nut. You know, this show he's going to do may be very funny.

GOLDIE. (*Softly, reproachfully*) Oh, Mr. Stein!

(GOLDIE goes to ROLLO. STEIN follows and sits at table.)

ROLLO. (*After playing a few chords. Rising*) Seems to be all right. Hewston must have oiled it this morning. Sing something sad—something about flowers—memories and albums and old forget-me-nots and all that sort of thing.

GOLDIE. (*Sitting at piano*) Would one about roses do?

ROLLO. Yes, of course it would—is it sad?

GOLDIE. Well—it's quite sad.

ROLLO. Good. Go ahead.

GOLDIE. (*Begins to sing softly*)

“Blushing June roses to you I've given—”
(*Stops*) No, that's wrong.

ROLLO. (*Leaning over piano*) It's beautiful—go on, please do.

GOLDIE. (*Sings*)

“Blushing June roses, breathing of Heaven,
Dew on their petals like tears, ere I go,
Blushing June roses to you I've given.
They tell my story—I love you so.”

ROLLO. Perfectly beautiful.

GOLDIE. Oh, no, it was dreadful!

ROLLO. It wasn't— isn't there more of it?

GOLDIE. Oh, yes, that was just the refrain—but it's enough, I should think.

ROLLO. But it isn't—do just begin it.

GOLDIE. I can't—I can't sing—my voice is all gone. I've been crying. (*Rises.*)

ROLLO. Crying? Oh, dear! Well, never mind, you've really sung quite enough—your voice is pathetic.

GOLDIE. I should think so.

ROLLO. Just as it should be. I know you can do it. You shall play Ophelia.

GOLDIE. (*Shocked—sits on piano bench*) Oh, Mr. Webster, you don't really mean that?

ROLLO. I certainly do mean it.

GOLDIE. Oh, but that would be dreadful—why, I couldn't any more play Ophelia!

ROLLO. Why not?

GOLDIE. Because it's a great part and some one great should play it.

ROLLO. Not at all. Ophelia wasn't a great tragedienne forty-five years old. She was just a simple little girl like you—she fell in love with me. That's all you've got to do. I mean, you can play Ophelia because you're young and pretty. Is your hair long?

GOLDIE. (*Rising*) Oh, no, I couldn't, Mr. Webster. Yes, it is long.

ROLLO. (*Turning to STEIN*) Well, Mr. Stein, Miss MacDuff is just what I want.

STEIN. (*Who has been enjoying the Scotch and Soda. Rising*) What?

ROLLO. For Ophelia. Now about the rest of the cast, if you want to go on with it—

STEIN. Well, I'm getting quite interested in your project, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Good! Then why not go ahead until something stops us? I don't care who you engage for the rest of the cast as long as they're regular Shakespearean actors—but they must have had experience.

STEIN. Well, if Shakespearean actors don't have experiences I don't know who does.

ROLLO. Suppose you bring an assortment round here to-morrow night—it might be as well for me to look at them before you engage them.

STEIN. Well, that couldn't do any harm. I'll think it over a little, Mr. Webster—and let you know.

ROLLO. All right. There's no risk in it for you, you know.

(HEWSTON *comes from kitchenette and hovers over tray and bottles.*)

STEIN. That's all right, but I don't want to see you lose anything, either.

ROLLO. Don't worry about me.

STEIN. Well, I think we may as well be going along. We had a very pleasant call, anyway, Mr. Webster.

(HEWSTON *helps STEIN on with his coat. GOLDIE crosses R.*)

ROLLO. Won't you have something? (*To GOLDIE, who casts a frightened look at the tray.*)

GOLDIE. Oh, no, nothing—I never do.

ROLLO. Just plain soda, I meant.

GOLDIE. No, thank you.

STEIN. You will hear from me. Coming, Goldie? (*GOLDIE crosses R.*)

ROLLO. (*To GOLDIE*) Must you go? Won't you let Hewston make you a cup of tea?

GOLDIE. (*Crossing two steps*) No, thank you, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Well, you'll come to-morrow night, won't you?

GOLDIE. I will if—I'll try to, Mr. Webster. (*Crosses two steps more.*)

ROLLO. Can't I call for you?

GOLDIE. No. Oh, no. Good-bye.

(*STEIN and GOLDIE exit, the door being held open for them patiently by HEWSTON. ROLLO goes to piano and tries to play GOLDIE'S song.*)

ROLLO. (*Singing*)

"Blushing June roses to you I've given——"

(*READY studio bell*)

HEWSTON. (*Coming L.C.*) Pardon me, sir, but would it be convenient for you for me to go for a walk in the park?

ROLLO. Certainly. (*Playing, sings again*) "La ta ta, ta ta ta, tears—ere I go——"

HEWSTON. I think it would rest me to spend an hour in the Zoo.

ROLLO. All right, Hewston. If you can rest in the Zoo, you must need it. What's the trouble? Do you have to work too hard?

HEWSTON. I'm not complaining about the work, sir. It's the kitchenette. A man can't be shut up in that place and keep his self-respect.

ROLLO. Can't you sit up in my bedroom?

HEWSTON. No, sir. I can't be running up and down the stairs every time you call me.

ROLLO. Well, the only other place I can suggest is under the piano. (*Continues song*)

"Blushing June roses——"

(*A hurried ring at door. HEWSTON goes, opens it and admits GOLDIE. HEWSTON returns to kitchenette.*)

GOLDIE. (*Agitated*) Oh, Mr. Webster, do please forgive me for coming back.

ROLLO. (*Rising*) Forgive you? Why, I'm perfectly delighted to see you. I've missed you terribly. I was just playing the music for your entrance when you came in—did you hear me?

GOLDIE. (*R. of table*) It's very hard for me to tell you why I came back, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. (*L. of table*) Then why do it? Suppose we say you came back—because I was wishing that you would—and wishing that I had asked for your telephone number. Have you got one?

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster—the man in the drug store gives me messages if they are important.

ROLLO. The man in the drug store? Well—does he decide whether they're important or not?

GOLDIE. Yes.

ROLLO. And what is the name of the drug store?

GOLDIE. It's Riddle's drug store—Chelsea 4321. But don't let's speak of such things at a time like this, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. A time like this? Is this some sort of a time?

GOLDIE. Oh, indeed—indeed it is!

(*Enter HEWSTON with hat. Starts for door R.*)

ROLLO. Good Heavens—then we'd better fortify ourselves for it. Hewston, some tea.

(*HEWSTON goes into kitchenette very dejectedly.*)

GOLDIE. (*Sits R. of table*) Oh, I had to come to

tell you—to beg you—please, Mr. Webster, don't go on with it.

ROLLO. Don't go on with it?

GOLDIE. He's going to do it—he said so, on the way down in the elevator.

ROLLO. But I'm glad he is—I expected him to.

GOLDIE. But you don't know him as I do—it isn't because he thinks it will be good.

ROLLO. Of course not.

GOLDIE. It is just—just to get your money. He thinks, if it does succeed, it will be because it is so bad.

ROLLO. Never mind what he thinks—I wouldn't even accuse him of such a thing.

GOLDIE. But do you realize what he is? He's not a good manager at all, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Of course not. No good manager would have anything to do with me.

GOLDIE. And I am nothing at all, Mr. Webster. I don't suppose there is a worse actress in the world. (*Enter HEWSTON with tea tray and service.*) I'm terribly afraid, in the first place—my mouth dries up and I want to run right off the stage. (*HEWSTON serves tea.*)

ROLLO. Will you have lemon or cream—cream, I think, is better for you—it's more soothing. (*Nods to HEWSTON. HEWSTON exits for cream.*)

GOLDIE. I do wish you would save yourself from us, Mr. Webster, before it is too late.

ROLLO. (*Getting book of "Hamlet" from piano*) I'm going to lend this to you—so you can read over the part of Ophelia.

GOLDIE. Please don't—

ROLLO. You won't mind when you see how much Ophelia is like you. She's afraid and everything.

GOLDIE. I know—I know what you mean. Don't make me, please. I know the part perfectly well.

(Enter HEWSTON—pours cream in tea.)

ROLLO. (*Sits L. of table, surprised*) You know it?

GOLDIE. Oh, yes. My grandmother made me learn all those parts—Juliet and Desdemona and Rosalind and Ophelia——

ROLLO. She did? What a wonderful grandmother.

GOLDIE. Yes, she was wonderful, Mr. Webster. Perhaps you've heard of her. They called her the "Beautiful Mary Mowe."

(HEWSTON *drops pitcher on tray.*)

ROLLO. I never did. My fault, I'm sure.

(HEWSTON *shows surprise and interest. He sets pitcher on tray, making a little clatter.*)

GOLDIE. She was a great actress. My mother went on the stage, too, in England. She wasn't successful at all, and I am even worse. Poor grandmother—it ruined her life to think we didn't inherit it, you know.

(HEWSTON *exits into kitchenette.*)

ROLLO. But how do you know you didn't?

GOLDIE. Oh, Mr. Webster—how do we know anything? I'm simply awful on the stage. I'm not so bad off—you see I'm not. (*Taking the teacup.*) I can lift up a cup and everything—but on the stage my hands take the strangest shapes—my feet don't look the same. Don't let me do it.

ROLLO. (*Greatly interested*) My dear child, I don't care what you may or may not have been.

You will find that playing Ophelia with me is quite different from anything you have ever imagined. (*Enter HEWSTON again with hat. Crosses to door R.*) You're not drinking your tea. Isn't it right?

GOLDIE. (*Sadly*) Oh, yes. I'm sure it's delicious.

ROLLO. I know what's the matter with it—it needs some cookies. Hewston, order up some of those cookies—the nutty ones.

HEWSTON. They never send up the nutty ones, sir.

ROLLO. Get them yourself.

(*HEWSTON exits door R.*)

GOLDIE. I don't want them, truly.

ROLLO. Wait till you see them. They look like Mount Fujiama, all exploding in beautiful almonds in the middle.

(*GOLDIE rises. ROLLO anxiously follows suit.*)

GOLDIE. Well, that's all, Mr. Webster. I can't do any more than warn you. I must go. (*Starts R.*)

ROLLO. (*Crosses to her*) Let me get a cab and take you home.

GOLDIE. No, no, thank you—I live way down town.

ROLLO. I was going way down town, anyway.

GOLDIE. Oh, not as far as I go, I'm sure.

ROLLO. What street is it?

GOLDIE. ——— Eighth Street.

ROLLO. I was, though—I was going to Seventh Street.

GOLDIE. Oh, Mr. Webster, what were you going to Seventh Street for? Why, there are only funny little shops there.

ROLLO. I know it. I was going to one of those

funny little shops to buy some of that funny old stuff—what do you call it?

GOLDIE. What do you do with it?

ROLLO. Well, you decide that after you get it. I was going really. I can prove it—look, here's my hat and stick. (*Gets them from R. of staircase.*) Please?

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster, I can't believe that you were going down to Seventh Street for anything.

ROLLO. Well, could you believe I was going down to Forty-second Street and Broadway?

GOLDIE. Yes.

ROLLO. Then we'll go there.

GOLDIE. And I can take the subway.

ROLLO. Yes, won't that be jolly? I'll dash down and get a cab on the street. Takes the starter hours to do it. I'll be right back for you.

(*ROLLO goes out, closing door with a brisk slam, LYDIA, upstairs, thinking they are both gone, sings. GOLDIE stands by fireplace.*)

LYDIA.

“I love to wander in the spring——”

(*Enters from ROLLO's bedroom upstairs and comes out on balcony singing. Sees GOLDIE.*)

LYDIA. Oh! Mercy! (*Exits hastily back into bedroom, closing door.*)

GOLDIE. Oh! Mercy!

(*GOLDIE stands dejectedly for a moment. HEWSTON enters with cookies on a plate. He offers them to GOLDIE, who refuses them without speaking.*)

HEWSTON. They're the nutty ones, Miss. (*He sets cookies on the table.*) If you'll excuse my saying so, Miss, I heard you mention your grandmother, the beautiful Mary Mowe.

GOLDIE. Yes?

HEWSTON. What would you say, Miss, if I was to tell you that my father acted with her?

GOLDIE. Your father? What was his name?

HEWSTON. Hewston, Miss, the same as mine—only he was Eustace and I am James.

GOLDIE. (*Surprised*) Eustace Hewston—why, he was almost as great as Grandma.

HEWSTON. Yes, Miss. That was him. And I was raised to follow in his footsteps. But what was the use? There was no call for acting in London. Only in the Provinces. That was the only place they would stand for Shakespeare.

GOLDIE. Are you sorry, Hewston? I mean would you have been happier, do you think, acting Shakespeare?

HEWSTON. Who can say, Miss? I would like to have played Hamlet just once. But I might not have been any happier if I had. There's a great many, Miss, that wishes to play that part. I sometimes think Shakespeare has a great deal to answer for, in the general discontent among the laboring classes.

(*Enter ROLLO.*)

ROLLO. All ready—I've got a beautiful cab all lined with royal purple—on to Forty-second Street!

(*HEWSTON exits into kitchenette.*)

GOLDIE. Mr. Webster, I've changed my mind.

ROLLO. (*Hopefully*) Really? On to Eighth Street?

GOLDIE. No! I don't want you to go with me at all.

ROLLO. Oh—do you really mean that?

GOLDIE. Yes, I do. Please let me go by myself. I'm used to it.

ROLLO. But I'm not. I never let you go by yourself but once—and then I tried to stop you. What's the matter? How can you have taken such a dislike to me just since I've been downstairs?

GOLDIE. I haven't taken a dislike to you—but I want to go by myself.

(*Enter HEWSTON.*)

ROLLO. (*Hurt*) Oh, very well, then. Will you at least ride in my cab?

GOLDIE. (*Crosses to R. of ROLLO*) I'd rather not.

ROLLO. Will you let Hewston put you on your subway?

GOLDIE. It's not necessary, truly.

ROLLO. I suppose I'll never see you again.

GOLDIE. Oh, yes, to-morrow night. If you really want me for the part.

ROLLO. Oh—can I really have you if I want you?

GOLDIE. Oh, yes, I couldn't afford to refuse a part. But I think it's better to be quite independent—I mean about going home and things like that—don't you?

ROLLO. I think it's awful—but you won't always feel the way you do—I'm sure you won't. Perhaps even by the time you get downstairs you'll feel differently about it. If you do, telephone up and I'll come right down.

GOLDIE. Good-bye!

ROLLO. Good-bye.

(*Exit GOLDIE.*)

HEWSTON. Shall I dismiss the cab, sir?

ROLLO. Yes, or take it to the Zoo.

HEWSTON. Thank you, sir.

(*Exit HEWSTON door R. Enter LYDIA down the stairway.*)

ROLLO. (*Seeing her—crosses in front of table.*)
What are you doing here? Sneak!

LYDIA. I'm not. I'm just a loving anxious sister.

ROLLO. That's the same thing. You've been up there all the time?

LYDIA. Well—after I started being up there I couldn't stop. Unless I jumped out the window.
(*Coming down to R. of table.*)

ROLLO. Spying on me!

LYDIA. I wouldn't have done it, Rollo, but my life is so uninteresting. And I had no idea that anyone was coming but Mr. Stein, when I started sneaking.

ROLLO. Neither had I.

LYDIA. I know it, Rollo. And then she came—your wild oat.

ROLLO. What do you mean—my wild oat?

LYDIA. Is she pretty?

ROLLO. Yes, she is. But there's nothing wild-oatlike about her. She wouldn't even let me take her to the subway in a cab.

LYDIA. She was right, Rollo. Actresses have to be awfully careful of their reputations. Oh, Rollo, if I could only be like her.

ROLLO. Don't be foolish.

LYDIA. But why is it foolish? Oh, Rollo, won't

you please let me be in it? Oh, please, Rollo, I'll do anything for you if you will?

ROLLO. My poor child, have a cookie, your mind seems to be quite unhinged.

LYDIA. I don't want it. Rollo, why can't I? I must have some talent, I'm your sister.

ROLLO. You know what I'm going to play, don't you?

LYDIA. Hamlet.

ROLLO. Yes. What would you like to be? What do you think nature has fitted you for, in the tragedy of Hamlet?

LYDIA. I don't know. I'd be willing to be anything—just to have some fun like the rest of you.

ROLLO. Fun! You don't suppose we're doing it for fun!

LYDIA. Well, what are you doing it for? No one wants you to do it.

ROLLO. I'm doing it because it's been my life-long ambition.

LYDIA. (*Coaring*) Isn't there just some little part I could play?

ROLLO. No—there aren't any little parts.

LYDIA. I know there are—there always are. People just come on and then you never see them again. I'd be willing to be one of those. Rollo, I'm your only little sister. Suppose anything should happen to me; then you'd be sorry.

ROLLO. Yes, I would. And I can at least see this doesn't happen to you.

LYDIA. (*Her manner changing. Sits R. of table.*) I can't promise that I won't tell Grandfather the whole thing, then. If it's so—debasement, I don't think you ought to do it.

ROLLO. If you tell Grandfather before the opening performance I shall never speak of you as being my sister again.

LYDIA. That won't matter. Everyone knows I am.

ROLLO. (*Weakening*) There's only one part you could possibly play and you certainly wouldn't want to do that.

LYDIA. I'd love to—who is it?

ROLLO. One of the players who comes to announce the play that they play in the play.

LYDIA. Will you let me do it, Rollo?

ROLLO. It's a part that requires wearing tights. (*Glancing at LYDIA to see the effect.*) You wouldn't mind that, I suppose?

LYDIA. No, Rollo. Not in Shakespeare. Oh, my dear, darling brother! What is my name in the play?

ROLLO. Your name is Prologue, and all you have to say is "For us and for our tragedy, here stooping to your clemency, we beg your hearing patiently."

LYDIA. (*Rising*) Oh, Rollo, you have made me so happy. (*Embracing him.*)

ROLLO. Well, it was quite unintentional, Lyd, believe me.

CURTAIN

ACT I

SCENE 2: *The same—at eight-thirty the following evening.*

ON RISE: STEIN, CAMPERDOWN, MRS. PARK-GALES, SKITTERLING and HEWSTON *discovered.*

HEWSTON *at the phone. The others waiting for ROLLO.*

HEWSTON. (*Speaking into phone*) Yes, sir, they've begun to come in. Quite a few are here, sir. Not Miss MacDuff—not yet, sir. (*To the people assembled*) Mr. Webster says, if you'll please make yourselves quite at home, he'll be here directly. (*Goes into hall R., where he stands ready to open door.*)

MRS. PARK-GALES. (*Seated L. of table, to SKITTERLING, who is standing above table with CAMPERDOWN*) Mr. Skitterling—who is this Rollo Webster?

SKITTERLING. (*Shrugs*) Ask Mr. Stein.

CAMPERDOWN. Who is Mr. Stein?

MRS. PARK-GALES. (*To STEIN, who is seated in chair by fireplace R.*) Mr. Stein—tell me about Rollo Webster.

STEIN. (*Comes to her*) Certainly, Mrs. Gales. What shall I tell you?

MRS. PARK-GALES. Well—who is he? Has he talent? Has he——

STEIN. I don't know. But he has a grandfather—old Horatio Webster, the air-brake man.

MRS. PARK-GALES. (*Impressed*) Oh, Horatio Webster! He was a great first nighter. I think I've heard my grandmother speak of him.

(*Enter LUCAS. HEWSTON takes his hat.*)

LUCAS. Thanks. (*Comes down R.C.*)

STEIN. Do you know Mrs. Park-Gales, Mr. Lucas?

LUCAS. (*Crosses L. to MRS. PARK-GALES. MR. STEIN drops down R.*) Don't insult me, Mr. Stein. Of course I do.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Why, George, I thought you were playing in Detroit, at that new theatre, the Art Craft.

LUCAS. No, my dear lady, I'm not. We rehearsed for three weeks, but they decided to turn it into a picture house. A great deal of craft and very little art.

MRS. PARK-GALES. How horrible. The "Movies"——

STEIN. Pictures are a great business. You take a picture and you got something.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Yes, but what?

STEIN. You get all through with the actors and there they are playing for you every night. If they are sick or dead, it don't make any difference. They are working just the same.

(*Bell.*)

LUCAS. Anything to make us work for nothing!

(*Joins CAMPERDOWN and SKITTERLING. They cross to window-seat L. and sit. Studio buzzer. HEWSTON admits GOLDIE. HEWSTON takes her*

cloak and GOLDIE goes to chair. She has her little book of "Hamlet.")

STEIN. *(Standing back of table)* Hello, Goldie.

MRS. PARK-GALES. *(Softly to STEIN)* Who is that?

STEIN. Miss MacDuff.

MRS. PARK-GALES. I don't know her. What is she going to play?

STEIN. Well, what do you suppose? There's only two lady parts in the play, ain't there? My office-boy was reading it and that's all he could find.

MRS. PARK-GALES. She looks very young to play Ophelia.

STEIN. Yes? Was Ophelia old?

MRS. PARK-GALES. No one but an experienced actress should attempt it.

STEIN. Well, Mr. Webster is backing the show and he wants this lady for Ophelia.

MRS. PARK-GALES. I see. What a pity!

STEIN. I'll introduce you. *(Goes to GOLDIE.)* Goldie, I want you to meet the Queen. *(Introducing.)* Mrs. Park-Gales, Miss MacDuff.

GOLDIE. *(Crosses to R. of table)* I am very glad to meet you.

MRS. PARK-GALES. How do you do, my dear? I'm so interested to hear that you are going to play Ophelia.

GOLDIE. *(Sits)* Yes? Why, Mrs. Gales?

MRS. PARK-GALES. Because it is my favorite role. Was, I should say—for I've not played the part for some years.

GOLDIE. Did you really enjoy playing it, Mrs. Gales?

MRS. PARK-GALES. Oh, yes, indeed, I did. I lived and breathed and was Ophelia. I used to behave very strangely in my dressing-room after the

performance. Especially if there were flowers about.

GOLDIE. (*Sympathetically*) Oh, dear, I hope I won't—

(*Enter ROLLO. HEWSTON takes his coat and stick.*
ROLLO *wears dinner coat.*)

ROLLO. Good evening, everybody. Sorry I'm late.

(LUCAS, CAMPERDOWN and SKITTERLING *rise and cross to L. of C.*)

STEIN. (*Introducing them*) Well, Mr. Webster, here I am with the troupe. Mr. Webster—Mr. Camperdown, Skitterling and Lucas—Mrs. Park-Gales.

ROLLO. (*Bowing to the ladies*) Mrs. Gales—and Miss MacDuff I've met. (*To GOLDIE*) How have you been? Never mind, you needn't tell me. (*To STEIN*) Camperdown for Polonius and Skitterling for the King?

STEIN. You guessed it, Mr. Webster—and Lucas is Ophelia's brother.

ROLLO. We can't do much with just these, you know—you haven't even got a ghost.

STEIN. Don't you be worried, Mr. Webster—we will have a dandy ghost Monday. I can even tell you before the evening is over, when we will open.

ROLLO. Well, we won't open before we're ready, I suppose.

STEIN. Why not? These people all know their parts. There's no use going over them just for their enjoyment. I was talking to George Lucas, and I could hardly stop him from reciting the whole play from the beginning.

(*Bell. Enter LYDIA admitted by HEWSTON.*)

LYDIA. Rollo! (*ROLLO goes to her and leads her down R., so they will not be heard. GOLDIE observes covertly and appears to be absorbed in her book.*) Rollo, Aunt Lane is downstairs.

ROLLO. Why is she? Have you told her?

LYDIA. Yes—she says the sooner we do it the better, and get it over with. She'll be our friend against Grandfather.

ROLLO. Does she know I don't want anyone to know you're related to me?

LYDIA. Yes. We practiced my name in the cab—she wouldn't let me come without her.

ROLLO. It wasn't necessary for you to come. I kept trying to tell you that all through dinner.

LYDIA. (*Starting to cry*) I thought you did.

ROLLO. Don't cry now and I'll introduce you to an actor. (*To LUCAS*) Mr. Lucas, Miss Julie Bouton. (*LUCAS pleased to meet her. Takes LYDIA to stairway. LYDIA cheers up at once. ROLLO speaks to HEWSTON*) Hewston, ask Miss Lane to come up.

GOLDIE. (*Coming to ROLLO*) Mr. Webster, I don't really feel that I ought to go on with it. I think you must see how different I am from the rest of them—how out of place.

ROLLO. Well, so am I.

GOLDIE. What a pity that Mrs. Park-Gales isn't young any more, so she could play "Ophelia."

ROLLO. Yes. What a pity Methuselah died. He might be playing Hamlet instead of me.

GOLDIE. Why not let Miss Bouton play my part?

ROLLO. Julie? Oh, she can't play anything. She wanted to be in it more—well—to see what's going on. You see she's—well, you know—she's a sweet little thing—but she's really an awful nuisance.

GOLDIE. Oh—I see. But I suppose she wasn't

always a nuisance, was she? (*Bell. Enter AUNT LANE.*)

ROLLO. Just a moment. Don't move—I'll be right back. (*Crosses to AUNT LANE.*)

AUNT LANE. Well, Rollo, this is very nice of you, to let me come in upon you unexpectedly. How are you getting on?

ROLLO. Why, I was getting on very well. I don't know just what to do about introducing you to these people.

AUNT LANE. (*Condescendingly but pleasantly*) Why, certainly, Rollo. I don't mind meeting them in the least. (*Sits wing chair R. STEIN goes C., back of group.*)

GOLDIE. (*Approaching*) Excuse me, Mr. Webster. But I think I'd better go, really.

ROLLO. No, I will not excuse you, Miss MacDuff—my Aunt Lane. (*Going to the introducing heavily.*) Mr. Stein, my Aunt Lane. Mrs. Park-Gales, Aunt Lane—don't go, please, Miss MacDuff. I wish to speak to you—and—Mr. Skitterling and Mr. Camperodwn, Aunt Lane. (*Glancing anxiously in GOLDIE's direction*) Mr. Lucas, Aunt Lane.

(SKITTERLING, CAMPERDOWN and LUCAS cross and bow C. and go up L.C. LUCAS goes up to LYDIA. ROLLO goes to GOLDIE. STEIN L. of AUNT LANE.)

AUNT LANE. (*To STEIN*) Mr. Lucas is a very handsome young man.

STEIN. Yes, Lucas is all right if he had a haircut.

AUNT LANE. Are you an actor, Mr. Stein?

STEIN. No, I'm the manager of the troupe.

AUNT LANE. (*Confidentially*) Rollo's not very strong, you know. I hope you won't let him play

anything but some little part, where it won't matter much. He gets very nervous and then he really should lie down.

STEIN. Well, if he lies down in this piece, I'm afraid it will be noticed.

AUNT LANE. Has the play been named yet?

STEIN. Why, yes, it's been named a long time. It's Hamlet.

AUNT LANE. (*Surprised*) Hamlet? Really—and is that Mr. Lucas going to play Hamlet? (*Glancing at LUCAS.*)

STEIN. No, your nephew, Mr. Webster, is going to play Hamlet.

AUNT LANE. Rollo! You're not serious, Mr. Stein. You certainly can't think that Rollo could play Hamlet?

STEIN. (*Gallantly*) Why shouldn't he, with such a handsome aunt?

AUNT LANE. (*Disturbed*) Why, it's absurd. I must speak to him. Rollo! (STEIN *up to join* GOLDIE. ROLLO *to* AUNT LANE) Rollo, I want to speak to you about this idea of yours of playing Hamlet—I supposed you were going to do some little thing that you had written yourself, like the charades you used to do with Lydia. But Hamlet! Is it true, Rollo, that you think of doing such a thing?

ROLLO. Yes, Aunt Lane. It's true. What about it?

AUNT LANE. (*Reproachfully*) Rollo, when I think of you in your perambulator, the dearest, sweetest, most considerate little baby I ever saw!

ROLLO. Aunt Lane, I beg that you will forget my character in my perambulator. I have changed since then.

AUNT LANE. (*Trying to be resigned*) Well, we'll just have to make the best of it and keep it from your Grandfather as long as we can.

ROLLO. I'm not going to take my own name. I'm using "Rollster," a combination of Rollo and Webster.

AUNT LANE. (*Laughing*) Rollster! Oh, Rollo, that's too ridiculous. It sounds like some kind of a mattress.

ROLLO. (*With dignity*) I don't know why!

AUNT LANE. I don't either, but it does.

ROLLO. Excuse me, Aunt Lane. I have my business to attend to. (*Turning to the others*) On Monday we'll start rehearsals. There's just one thing I'd like to make sure of now—that is that the voices go together.

LYDIA. My voice isn't very good this evening, Rollo.

ROLLO. That doesn't matter—you won't need to use it.

STEIN. Why not have them harmonize?

ROLLO. (*STEIN goes L. to piano bench, sits*) Suppose we try a few lines—those who are together in scenes. Suppose—you know the part of Laertes, Mr. Lucas. (*Takes copy of "Hamlet" from his pocket.*)

LUCAS. Yes, Mr. Webster, certainly. (*He comes down.* LYDIA *sits on steps.*)

ROLLO. Very good. It's important that your voice should suit Miss MacDuff's.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Mr. Lucas has a beautiful voice.

ROLLO. Yes? Miss MacDuff, will you come down? We'll start on, "My necessities are embarked—"

(LUCAS and GOLDIE down C. LUCAS R.C. GOLDIE L.C. ROLLO down R.)

LUCAS. (*Picking it up*)

"My necessities are embarked, farewell,

And sister as the winds give benefit
 And convoy is assistant, do not sleep
 But let me hear from you." (*His hand on GOLDIE'S arm.*)

ROLLO. Don't put your hand on her.

LUCAS. No, sir, certainly not.

GOLDIE. (*Casting an inquiring look at ROLLO*)
 Shall I?

ROLLO. Yes, go on.

GOLDIE. Will you just say that over again?

ROLLO. Just the last line, please.

LUCAS. Just the last line.

"But let me hear from you."

GOLDIE. "Do you doubt that?"

LUCAS.

"For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,

A violet in the youth of primy nature

Forward not permanent, sweet, not lasting.

The perfume and suppliance of a minute no
 more."

GOLDIE. (*Softly and with raised eyebrows*)

"No more but so?"

LUCAS.

"Think it no more for nature—"

ROLLO. (*Interrupting*) Skip to—"And in the
 morn and liquid dew of youth—"

LUCAS.

"And in the morn and liquid dew of youth—"
 (*He hesitates.*)

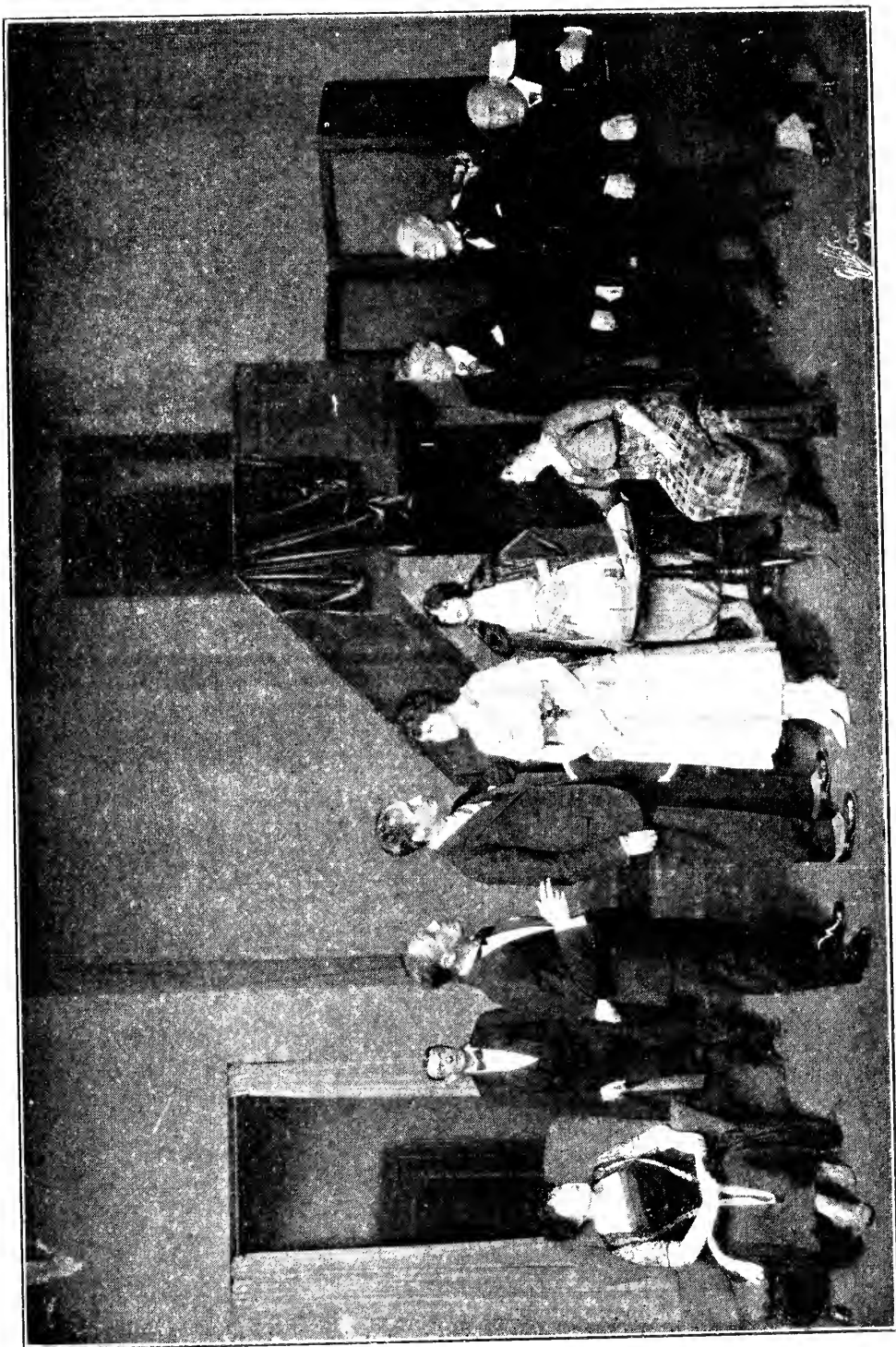
ROLLO. (*Prompting him*) "Contagious blast-
 ments—"

LUCAS.

"Contagious blastments—"

(*To ROLLO*) Thank you.

ROLLO. Not at all,



See Page 39

"ROLLO'S WILD OAT"

LUCAS.

"Are most imminent,
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear;
Youth to itself rebels, tho' none else near."

STEIN. (*Aside*) Whatever that means. (CAMPERDOWN and SKITTERLING look at him reproachfully.)

GOLDIE.

"I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But good my
brother,
Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to Heaven——"

Oh, dear—this spoils it all.

ROLLO. (*Goes to her. LUCAS drops down R.*)
What's the matter?

GOLDIE. This line—I can't. I just can't say it.
(*Showing him in the book. CAMPERDOWN and SKITTERLING come down L.C.*)

ROLLO.

"Whiles like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads."
—You don't like to say that?

GOLDIE. Not the "whiles like a puff'd" part.

ROLLO. Why not?

GOLDIE. I don't think it's nice.

ROLLO. It's the "reckless libertine," I suppose,
you don't like.

GOLDIE. I couldn't say it.

ROLLO. Come to think of it, I don't believe she
said it. We'll cut it out.

MRS. PARK-GALES. (*Unable to restrain herself*)
Mr. Webster.

CAMPERDOWN. (*With SKITTERLING advance*)
But Mr. Shakespeare said it. Are you going to improve on Shakespeare, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. (*Crosses to CAMPERDOWN*) Why not? If Miss MacDuff had told Shakespeare that Ophelia wouldn't have said that, he'd have said, "Wouldn't she?" that's all. He'd have changed it. He was a nice fellow, you know, nothing God-like or disagreeable about him. And there's no reason why, just because he's dead, Ophelia should go on saying that line. "Puff'd and reckless libertine" is rather disgusting. Sounds more like Polonius.

MRS. PARK-GALES. (*Rising and coming c.*) Excuse me, Mr. Webster—but it's all in the way of saying it—if you'll pardon a suggestion, just give Mr. Lucas a look, dear. (*To GOLDIE*) When you say that. Let me show you. (*Crosses to LUCAS. Passes GOLDIE R. with a jaunty look at LUCAS.*) Put your arm around me, George.

LUCAS. (*To ROLLO*) May I?

ROLLO. If she wants you to.

MRS. PARK-GALES.

"Do not as some ungracious pastors do,

Show me the steep and thorny way to Heaven

Whiles like a puff'd and reckless libertine——"

—A little nudge here helps it. You can do that, can't you?

GOLDIE. Why, I suppose I could—— (*Crosses back c.*)

(MRS. PARK-GALES *crosses to ROLLO.*)

ROLLO. But I don't want her to do it, Mrs. Gales. Ophelia wouldn't have done it.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Oh, but I've played the part so many times, Mr. Webster—and I always did it. In fact was asked to do it. It helps Mr. Lucas.

ROLLO. I don't think Mr. Lucas needs any help. And what I want Miss MacDuff to do is to act like Ophelia. Not like an actress playing Ophelia.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Oh, well, just one thing, my dear. (*To GOLDIE*) Don't swallow continually the way you do. I'm sure Ophelia didn't do that.

GOLDIE. I know—it's dreadful! I can't help it! It's because I'm nervous.

ROLLO. (*To GOLDIE*) Do it. Of course Ophelia did it. Wasn't she nervous? Swallow and skip to "Whilst himself the primrose path of dalliance treads."

(MRS. PARK-GALES *sits R. of table.*)

GOLDIE.

"Whilst himself the primrose path of dalliance treads

And reck's not his own rede."

LUCAS.

"Oh fear me not, I stay too long

But here my father comes——"

CAMPERDOWN. Shall I come in, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. Yes, for a minute.

CAMPERDOWN. (*Strides to LUCAS*)

"Yet here, Laertes,

Aboard, aboard for shame.

The wind sets in the shoulder of your sail,

And you are stayed for!

There my blessing with you." (*Laying his hand on the top of LUCAS' head, which LUCAS does not enjoy.*)

ROLLO. That will do. It's all right. (*To GOLDIE*) I wish there was more of you.

CAMPERDOWN. (*With sarcasm*) Won't you have time to write something in—before we open, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. What do you mean?

CAMPERDOWN. Well, I only thought——

STEIN. Mr. Camperdown, an actor should never think at rehearsals.

CAMPERDOWN. Some people can't help thinking, Mr. Stein. (*Displeased, crosses to SKITTERLING.*)

LUCAS. (*To GOLDIE*) As soon as we get easy, I think you will be happy in the scenes we have together.

GOLDIE. Do you? (*They start up c. together. ROLLO follows, taking GOLDIE back.*)

(*LUCAS sits on steps with LYDIA.*)

ROLLO. You'd better sit here by Aunt Lane.

AUNT LANE. (*To GOLDIE*) My dear, you'll make a lovely Ophelia.

GOLDIE. Oh, Miss Lane, do you think so? I feel that Shakespeare hates me so already, I can hardly stand it.

AUNT LANE. Oh, but you mustn't feel that way—must she, Rollo?

ROLLO. That Shakespeare hates her? Why, he's just standing around somewhere hoping she won't hate him.

AUNT LANE. Try the soliloquy, Rollo—go on—try it.

ROLLO. I'd rather not if you don't mind.

AUNT LANE. I wouldn't make any changes, Rollo. Didn't somebody say we should neither add to nor take away from it?

ROLLO. That was the Bible, dear.

AUNT LANE. Oh, so it was.

ROLLO. I think we'll wait until the cast is complete before we rehearse any more—I'm having a little supper served in the grill. Won't you all go down, please? Aunt Lane, let Mr. Stein take you down.

AUNT LANE. I don't think I will, Rollo.

ROLLO. Of course you will. It's jolly down there. I've ordered crab meat especially for you.

AUNT LANE. Why, how could you when you didn't know I was coming?

ROLLO. Well, I was afraid you would—go along—there's a dear. Mr. Stein, will you take down Aunt Lane?

AUNT LANE. (*Glancing at LYDIA*) Oh, Rollo! How about Miss Bouton?

ROLLO. Miss Bouton!

LYDIA. (*Who has become absorbed with LUCAS*) What's the matter?

ROLLO. Supper in the grill. Mr. Lucas, will you take Miss Bouton?

LUCAS. With pleasure.

(*Exit AUNT LANE, STEIN, LUCAS AND LYDIA.*)

ROLLO. Wont you gentlemen take down Mrs. Park-Gales? (*To CAMPERDOWN and SKITTERLING as they start for the door.*)

SKITTERLING. (*Returning to MISS PARK-GALES*) I beg your pardon, Mrs. Gales.

CAMPERDOWN. So do I, I'm sure.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Pray don't. I never blame people for hurrying to eat when they're hungry. As for me, I had a hearty dinner not so long ago. (*Spoken as they move arm in arm to D.R. and exit.*)

ROLLO. (*To GOLDIE, who starts toward the door*) Are you hungry?

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Then wait a minute. I have something I want to say to you.

GOLDIE. What is it, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. I've forgotten, but haven't you something you want to say to me?

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster, you shouldn't have

sent me the roses. (GOLDIE *crosses* L.C. ROLLO R.C.)

ROLLO. I should. But I do wish you'd tell me where you live. I'd like to be able to address my own roses instead of sending them to a drug store.

GOLDIE. I wouldn't mind telling you—but I'm so afraid you might come to see me.

ROLLO. Oh, you wouldn't want me to do that?

GOLDIE. No. There really isn't room.

ROLLO. Isn't room—— Well, there's a hall outside, isn't there?

GOLDIE. Yes. But I wouldn't like to have you standing in the hall.

ROLLO. I could bring a chair with me. I've never had such a curiosity to see an apartment. You really must let me come, and just look at it through the keyhole.

GOLDIE. It really isn't an apartment, you see—it's just a room and bath and kitchenette. To tell the truth——

ROLLO. If you're going to tell the truth, perhaps you'd better sit down.

GOLDIE. (*Sitting as he suggests at L. of table*) There really isn't any kitchenette—I mean the bath and kitchenette are the same.

ROLLO. (*Sitting at R. of table*) Oh, they are?

GOLDIE. I have a little alcohol lamp and I make coffee, in the bathtub. Then, when the lamp explodes, it doesn't set fire to anything.

ROLLO. You must give me your word of honor never to do such a thing again.

GOLDIE. Why, there isn't the slightest danger. I make coffee and boil eggs and make toast every morning. Because we don't like to go out for breakfast. Besides, there's the baby.

ROLLO. (*Coldly*) Oh! Your baby?

GOLDIE. Oh, no. I wish it was. My sister's

baby. Such a darling. She's been staying with me. But she went out West yesterday and took the baby with her. That's why I'd been crying.

ROLLO. Oh, I see.

GOLDIE. She quarreled with her husband because he gave up an awfully good position in an automobile factory to go into the movies. He's very good looking. So Tilda left him and came East. But now he's gone back to the factory and had quite a raise in salary—so she's gone back to him.

ROLLO. And taken the baby.

GOLDIE. (*Sadly*) Yes.

ROLLO. Oh, well, maybe she'll send it on occasionally. I should think it would have been pretty crowded—you and Tilda and the baby all in one bath-tub—room, I mean.

GOLDIE. It didn't seem so. The baby was a tiny little thing. It had great big blue eyes and curls all over its head.

ROLLO. I know. They often do.

GOLDIE. The dearest thing was the way it would go to sleep in my arms. It really—well, it seems ridiculous to say it—but it seemed to go to sleep better for me than for Tilda.

ROLLO. I don't think that is surprising at all.

GOLDIE. It was so wonderful to sit and watch it. It looked just like an angel. And it gave you the most beautiful feeling, that you weren't doing anything at all, and yet were doing the most important thing in the world—putting a baby to sleep.

ROLLO. Yes. It is important. For if they didn't go to sleep it would drive all the rest of us crazy. We had a gardener once whose baby never went to sleep. It cried all night and we had to discharge him.

GOLDIE. Why, the poor little thing! What do you suppose was the matter with it?

ROLLO. Oh, I don't know. Babies are like human beings, I think. Some of them just downright disagreeable and dissatisfied with everything. This baby's mother made splendid bread, too. I used to sneak down to the cottage often for bread and sugar——

GOLDIE. Maybe the baby wasn't old enough to appreciate bread and sugar.

ROLLO. I know, but why not look ahead a little, even if you are a baby?

GOLDIE. Why not look ahead a little, even if you're not?

ROLLO. Do you mean anything by that?

GOLDIE. Yes—of course, I've no right to say it, so I won't. Tell me about yourself when you're at home. I suppose you have a home?

ROLLO. Good Heavens, I should say I had! I don't like to think of it—— However, what sort of thing would you like me to tell you?

GOLDIE. Oh, about the house, and where it is, and what you do.

ROLLO. Well, let's see. It's a large, rambling old house in the country. The only trouble is, it never rambles—it stays right there.

GOLDIE. And is there a garden? And has it roses in it?

ROLLO. I should say so. Old-fashioned roses about as big as a quarter with hundreds of leaves—and thousands of rose-bugs.

GOLDIE. Oh, how lovely. And has it got mignonette in it, too?

ROLLO. Oh, Lord, yes. Awfully big, fat mignonette, and bluebells and campanullas, and laburnam and dulcinneam, and corryopsis and cockalorums, and all those things.

GOLDIE. Oh, it must be lovely!

ROLLO. Now what shall I tell you?

GOLDIE. What do you do?

ROLLO. Nothing much. I ride some——

GOLDIE. Oh, I've always wanted to do that. On horseback, you mean?

ROLLO. Yes, on and off. I started when I was only five and I got thrown and broke my shoulder and my collar-bone and my nose all the first year. It isn't quite right yet. (*Feeling nose.*) Maybe you've noticed it?

GOLDIE. No, I just thought it was sort of Roman.

ROLLO. No, it's sort of Shetland.

GOLDIE. Tell me about the family.

ROLLO. Oh, it's just Grandfather and Lydia and Aunt Lane.

GOLDIE. What an odd name!

ROLLO. Yes, I had two Aunt Annas, so Grandfather decided to call one by her last name. That was Aunt Lane. She was very angry, and she came to see Grandfather about it, and she's lived with us ever since.

GOLDIE. And what is your Grandfather like?

ROLLO. (*Frowning*) Oh, he's a terror. Wants everybody to do what *he* wants.

GOLDIE. What does he want you to do?

ROLLO. He'd like to have me interested in air-brakes.

GOLDIE. Air-brakes? Tell me about them?

ROLLO. Well, when you're on a train and it gives a lurch, and all the people sitting down are thrown on the floor, and all the people standing up are thrown on top of them, that's the air-break working.

GOLDIE. I've always wondered what that was. I should think you'd want to do something about it.

ROLLO. I don't—the only thing I want to do is

to have you tell me—if everything should come out all right—to have you tell me—— (*Enter HEWSTON. Coughs discreetly.*)—something more about your Grandmother.

HEWSTON. I'm afraid they can't hold the table much longer, sir.

ROLLO. Well, why don't you get a quiet table they can hold.

GOLDIE. I think we had better go, Mr. Webster. (*She starts off.*)

ROLLO. Oh, dear, I don't like the idea of that restive table. Hewston, can't you make us an omelette or something? I suppose not. (*Follows GOLDIE off.*)

(*HEWSTON stalks across the stage in Shakespearean style.*)

HEWSTON. Ah, yes, yes, indeed—those were the days—

“ 'Tis not alone me inky cloak, good mother.”
(*Continues speech to “Shapes of grief. These do but seem—”*)

(*Bell. Startled back to the reality of his position, he goes to door. Admits LYDIA and LUCAS.*)

LYDIA. (*Sitting on arm of chair R.*) I want my cape, Hewston.

LUCAS. My hat, please. (*To LYDIA*) Why can't I take you home?

LYDIA. Oh, you're awfully kind, but I'm going with Miss Lane. You see, we're stopping at the same hotel.

LUCAS. Well, can't I take you both? What hotel is it?

LYDIA. Well, it isn't really a hotel—it's the Col-

ony Club. Aunt Lane likes it. She always stops there.

LUCAS. Aunt Lane? Is she your aunt?

LYDIA. (*Crosses to c., followed by LUCAS*) Oh, dear—you won't tell, will you?

LUCAS. Of course not—if you don't want me to.

LYDIA. Rollo doesn't want anyone to know. Because people might think he let me be in the play just because I'm his sister.

LUCAS. I see. You haven't told me yet what part you're playing.

LYDIA. I didn't like to—it's so small. It's Prologue.

LUCAS. Oh, Prologue! "For us and for our tragedy"?

LYDIA. Yes. You see, I've never played a part before.

LUCAS. I see. I wish we had some scenes together.

LYDIA. Oh, it's awfully kind of you to say so.

(*HEWSTON brings cape to place on LYDIA's shoulders. LUCAS takes it from him and performs the service.*)

LUCAS. And if I can be of any help to you, you mustn't hesitate to call upon me.

LYDIA. Oh, thank you. I'm sure you can. You speak so beautifully.

LUCAS. Do you think so, really?

LYDIA. Oh, yes. Why, everything you say sounds just like Shakespeare. I mean—I mean—I can't imagine you saying anything just ordinary, like "What time does the train go?" or anything like that. I suppose you do, though, sometimes.

LUCAS. You're awfully amusing.

LYDIA. Am I? I wish I were. I live such a

secluded life that I don't know whether I am or not.

(HEWSTON *approaches with a hat.*)

HEWSTON. Is this your hat, sir?

LUCAS. (*Barely glancing at it*) No. You live in the country, don't you?

LYDIA. Yes. With my Grandfather at Shelbrooke. He has a very large place and he's awfully lonely, so we have to live with him.

LUCAS. I see. But don't you like the country? I long so for the birds and flowers at this season of the year—long for my own country place in the hills of Surrey.

LYDIA. Yes, at this season of the year it's beginning to be nice. But in winter it's so terribly cold.

LUCAS. (*Curious about the house*) But you have steam heat, don't you?

LYDIA. Not outdoors. And oh, it's not life, in the country, is it?

LUCAS. Neither is this. I don't know where we can find life—real life.

HEWSTON. (*With another hat*) Is this your hat, sir?

LUCAS. No! (*To LYDIA*) I sometimes find it in a book, sometimes on my horse galloping in the teeth of the wind. Sometimes in a pair of friendly eyes.

LYDIA. I know exactly what you mean.

(*Phone rings. LYDIA crosses to mirror on wall L.*)

HEWSTON. (*Answering phone*) Yes, sir—very well, sir. (*To LYDIA*) I'm to take down all the wraps and your Aunt Lane's cab is here, Miss.

LUCAS. My hat, please?

(HEWSTON *brings the wraps and all three hats, which he extends. LUCAS takes one.*)

HEWSTON. I offered you that one, sir.

LUCAS. Thanks very much. Aren't you forgetting this? (*Picking up GOLDIE's wrap.*)

HEWSTON. I was told to forget it, sir.

ROLLO. (*Entering*) Hurry along, Hewston. (*To LYDIA*) Miss Bouton, are you going?

(*Exit HEWSTON.*)

LYDIA. (*Crossing briskly R.*) Yes, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Miss Lane is waiting.

LYDIA. I know it. I hope your play will be a great success. (*Seeing GOLDIE's wrap*) There's some one's wrap. Hewston's a stupid idiot, isn't he?

ROLLO. Isn't he? But then, so is almost everybody. (*With a meaning look.*)

LYDIA. Oh, excuse me, I didn't understand.

ROLLO. Didn't understand what?

LYDIA. (*Softly*) It's your wild oat.

LUCAS. Good-night!

ROLLO. Good-night!

(*LYDIA and LUCAS exit. ROLLO lights cigarette, gets pillows from window-seat and puts them in wing chair, humming, "Blushing June Roses." Enter HEWSTON.*)

ROLLO. Have they gone, Hewston?

HEWSTON. Why, some of them have and some of them haven't, sir. There was a taxi and quite an argument about how many could get into it.

ROLLO. I see.

HEWSTON. Shall I close up, sir?

ROLLO. Why should you? It begins to dawn

upon me that you don't know very much, Hewston.

HEWSTON. Perhaps not, sir.

ROLLO. A man in the city is quite different from a man in the country, Hewston.

HEWSTON. Yes, sir.

ROLLO. And the service he requires is different. A little intelligence in the city is quite desirable sometimes. I don't know if I make myself clear.

HEWSTON. Well, I'm sure I don't if you don't, sir.

ROLLO. I told you to keep Miss Goldie's cloak here. And you did it.

HEWSTON. And shouldn't I have done it, sir?

ROLLO. You should. But you don't suppose it's going to end there, do you?

HEWSTON. What, sir?

ROLLO. (*With a gesture of impatience*) You win, Hewston—listen, will you? When Miss MacDuff comes for her cloak, when she enters the door—which I will open—I want you to come from that point.

HEWSTON. What point, sir?

ROLLO. That chair.

HEWSTON. Which chair, sir?

ROLLO. The second chair, where you will be standing, with the cloak and be saying, "Look, sir. Miss Goldie's cloak has been forgotten."

HEWSTON. Yes, sir.

ROLLO. It isn't possible that you understand me?

HEWSTON. Yes, sir, I do.

ROLLO. Let's see you do it, then. (*ROLLO gives him the wrap, goes to door, admitting imaginary person.*)

HEWSTON. (*Carefully taking position. Tragically*) Look, sir! Miss Goldie's cloak has been forgotten!

ROLLO. Yes. But don't be so gloomy about it. After all, it doesn't amount to anything.

HEWSTON. (*Doubtfully*) No, sir.

ROLLO. What's the matter?

HEWSTON. Well, sir—if I might suggest something.

ROLLO. Certainly—go ahead.

HEWSTON. I wouldn't say "Miss Goldie," sir.

ROLLO. Oh!—

HEWSTON. No, sir, I'd say Miss MacDuff. I think I could speak it much more naturally with that alteration.

ROLLO. Certainly. Say what seems natural, only convey my meaning.

HEWSTON. (*Pleased*) Yes, sir.

ROLLO. She's a lovely girl, Hewston. Her only fault is that she doesn't think she can play Ophelia—but when you think of other people's faults, that isn't much. I have the greatest admiration and respect for her. And if anyone were to say anything against her in my presence, their life wouldn't be worth a straw. (*Looks a little fiercely at HEWSTON.*)

HEWSTON. I understand, sir.

(*Bell. ROLLO motions HEWSTON back in position. Goes to the door and opens it, admitting MR. STEIN.*)

HEWSTON. (*Not seeing him, fatuously*) Oh, look sir, Miss MacDuff's cloak has been mislaid—left here quite unbeknownst, I should say.

STEIN. (*Taking cloak*) Just what I came for, thank you. Good-night, Mr. Webster. (*Exits.*)

(*ROLLO looks at HEWSTON with disgust.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: ROLLO'S *dressing-room in the Oddity Theatre. A dressing-table R. A chair in front of it. A poster of "The Rollster Producing Company" on wall R.U.E. A sheet for covering costumes on wall L.U.E. A door upstage C. A wardrobe chest down L.C. A chair up R.*

AT RISE: HEWSTON *enters the room, followed by* LYDIA *in Prologue costume.*

LYDIA. Where have you looked for him, Hewston?

HEWSTON. Well, Miss, there's not much place to look, only behind the curtains, and I've shaken them thoroughly.

LYDIA. But you don't really think he's running away, Hewston? Why, what can he be thinking of?

HEWSTON. Very likely he's not thinking at all, Miss—just stepping out.

LYDIA. Hewston, shouldn't you notify Mr. Stein?

HEWSTON. Well, that's it, Miss. It's very early. Of course, Mr. Rollo has plenty of time to get back.

LYDIA. Yes, if we only knew which direction he's going in. Hewston, I think we should ask some one's advice.

HEWSTON. Yes, Miss—whose?

LYDIA. Well, I think Mr. Lucas is the most sensible one in the company, don't you?

HEWSTON. (*Gloomily*) He might be, at that.

LYDIA. Yes, ask Mr. Lucas to come here.

HEWSTON. If I'll just raise my voice, he'll hear me. (*Speaking up*) Mr. Lucas, would you kindly step into Mr. Webster's dressing-room for a moment?

LUCAS. (*Very audibly from the next room*) Why, certainly. Is there any hurry?

LYDIA. (*Speaking up*) Yes, there is. (*To HEWSTON*) Why, isn't that wonderful? You can hear perfectly.

HEWSTON. Very wonderful—sometimes, Miss.

(*Enter LUCAS in costume of Laertes.*)

LYDIA. (*Looking at him admiringly*) Mercy!

LUCAS. Is anything the matter?

LYDIA. Nothing. Only you look so terribly handsome. (*Her manner changing*) Yes, yes, there is something the matter. Rollo has disappeared.

LUCAS. Disappeared? Why, that's impossible! (*Glancing at HEWSTON.*)

HEWSTON. Yes, sir, it's true!

LYDIA. Do you think we ought to send Hewston to tell Mr. Stein?

LUCAS. Decidedly!

LYDIA. Don't bring him back with you, Hewston, if you can help it. Just say that Mr. Rollo has gone—and—er—— (*Looking inquiringly at LUCAS.*)

LUCAS. And hasn't come back.

LYDIA. Yes—tell him that, Hewston.

HEWSTON. Yes, Miss. (*Exits.*)

LYDIA. What do you suppose we'll do—if he doesn't come back at all? (*LYDIA down R.*)

LUCAS. It's odd, really. Everything I have anything to do with, closes just before it opens.

LYDIA. Does it? Of course, I can't be very sorry because I'm so frightened.

LUCAS. Are you? (*LUCAS comes down L. of LYDIA.*)

LYDIA. Yes. Mr. Lucas, you've been so kind to me, helping me about my part, and everything. But I don't think I'll ever be really great. Do you?

LUCAS. Who can tell?

LYDIA. Why, I think almost anyone can. I'm not strange enough. Now, you—anyone can see that you are a great actor.

LUCAS. Do you think so?

LYDIA. Oh, yes, you are quite different from anyone I've ever met. You seem to be acting all the time. I suppose you do it even when you are alone.

LUCAS. I'm not acting when I'm with you, Lydia.

LYDIA. Oh, aren't you? You seem to be. I like it. Only it does make you seem very far away.

LUCAS. I don't want to seem far away—and I don't want to be far away. And I shall regret it most bitterly if you give up the stage, for then I shall lose you out of my life.

LYDIA. Why, Mr. Lucas! (*Looking up at him.*)

LUCAS. Call me George.

LYDIA. Oh, I couldn't! (*Takes a side step nearer LUCAS.*)

LUCAS. Why, of course you could. Call me George. (*About to put his arm around her.*)

(*Enter ROLLO. His overcoat is on over his Hamlet costume.*)

ROLLO. What's the idea?

LYDIA. (*Springing away from LUCAS. LUCAS goes L.*) That's just what we were asking.

ROLLO. Oh, really? It didn't sound like that.

LYDIA. (*Sitting on chair*) Where have you been?

ROLLO. I've been out looking at the moon.

LYDIA. Looking at the moon—where?

ROLLO. In it's usual place.

LYDIA. But where were you, Rollo?

ROLLO. I was just across the street in a doorway I found over there.

LYDIA. On the night you're going to play Hamlet!

ROLLO. Yes—the moon is shining just the same. Did you notice it, Lucas?

LUCAS. I can't say I did. I came down in the subway.

ROLLO. You ought to go out and have a look at it. After all, Nature—well, she's pretty wonderful, I don't care what you say! (*Crosses L. to LUCAS.*)

LUCAS. I never had any idea but that she was, Mr. Webster.

LYDIA. You don't seem to realize that we were terribly worried about you, Rollo. Hewston has gone to tell Mr. Stein that you've disappeared.

ROLLO. (*Glancing accusingly at LUCAS*) Who told him to do that?

LYDIA. Well, you had, hadn't you? How could we know that you were hiding in a doorway?

(*Enter STEIN.*)

STEIN. (*Much excited*) Well, here he is! You want to turn my hair white, I suppose. You are always making trouble, Lucas, getting up a scare. I heard it about you before. In every company you ever was you get up an excitement over nothing.

LUCAS. Don't be absurd, Mr. Stein. I had nothing to do with it.

STEIN. (*To ROLLO*) They told me you had left

us flat. That's a nice thing to say to a manager, when he is standing in the lobby on opening night, trying to keep a smile on his face. Where was you, Rollo?

ROLLO. I just stepped out to get a little air. Quite natural, I should think.

STEIN. I should think so, too. (*Sits on bench.*)

LUCAS. (*Crossing to LYDIA*) If I can't be of any more service to you, I'll go.

LYDIA. Thank you so much for all you've done. I'll go, too. (*Follows LUCAS to D. LUCAS exits.*)

ROLLO. Lydia, just a moment! (*To her softly*) If I ever catch you calling him George! (*Exit LYDIA haughtily.*)

STEIN. Don't you feel good, Rollo?

ROLLO. I feel all right. (*Takes off overcoat and puts it on chair up stage. Sits in chair at dressing-table.*)

STEIN. You know, I'm as nervous as the dickens! Some fellows I know have been talking to me out there; because I am producing Shakespeare they got a respect for me they never had before.

ROLLO. Well, that's good. Better late than never.

STEIN. Those fellows said they didn't think I had it in me. I didn't. It is you I have to thank, Rollo. (*Crosses to ROLLO.*)

ROLLO. That's all right, Stein, old man. I don't want you to thank me.

STEIN. Call me Abie.

ROLLO. If you don't mind, I won't just now. Later, perhaps—after the performance.

STEIN. Rollo, promise me you ain't going to lay down on me.

ROLLO. (*Rising*) My God, no!

STEIN. All right—all right! Don't get excited! And if you do get nervous, just say to yourself,

"Abie is counting on me." (*Lights go out. Calling as he exits*) Lights! Lights!

HEWSTON. (*Enters, lighting the candles on ROLLO'S dressing-table*) I thought this would happen, sir, when I saw the electrician, so I prepared for it.

(*A knock on the door. ROLLO opens door. GOLDIE stands in the doorway. She wears a kimono, but her hair is still coiled round her head.*)

GOLDIE. Mr. Webster, the lights have gone out in my dressing-room.

ROLLO. Mine are out, too. Come in and wait. Hewston, find the electrician.

(*Exit HEWSTON.*)

GOLDIE. (*Coming in*) It's terribly early. (*Goes L. Sits on bench.*)

ROLLO. Yes—it will be forever until the curtain goes up. But it will go up. (*Sits on bench L. of GOLDIE.*)

GOLDIE. Oh, yes, it will go up. And then, no matter what happens, it will come down.

ROLLO. Something quite outside myself seems telling me that it's a tremendous moment. A moment so many must have gone through. I suppose because a tremendous man provided it for us. When I read his lines, I find I am singing them.

GOLDIE. That's because he meant you to.

ROLLO. He grips you, Goldie. You can't get away from him.

GOLDIE. You could have—but it's too late now.

ROLLO. Goldie, we are like two children waiting to be born into a wonderful world. The world Shakespeare made.

GOLDIE. Yes. I don't feel as though I shall live very long.

ROLLO. Of course you will. It's natural that the greatness of what we are about to do should be a little overpowering.

GOLDIE. Oh, I'm glad to hear you speak that way. It is great—much too great for us—I mean for me. And I can't help feeling that Mrs. Park-Gales ought to be doing it. She wouldn't have wanted anything changed or left out—she wouldn't mind “a puff'd and reckless libertine” at all. She said so.

ROLLO. Goldie, don't talk like that.

GOLDIE. They read the lines the way he meant them to—I'm sure he never would have wanted me.
(*WARNING—Lights*)

ROLLO. He was a man, Goldie. Of course he would have wanted you—and hated Mrs. Park-Gales.

GOLDIE. Do you think so?

ROLLO. I know it. I wish I could say something to comfort you, Goldie. But I can't seem to help thinking of myself—this feeling of—of awe that I have is almost physical.

GOLDIE. I know. Take long breaths, and if you can keep your knees stiff, you will be all right. Some one who knew all about it told me that.

ROLLO. Who knew all about what?

GOLDIE. Why, stage-fright. That's what we have. I always have it.

ROLLO. It's Shakespeare, Goldie.

GOLDIE. I felt just the same way when I played in “Sinbad the Sailor.” Oh, if we only weren't going to do it. (*Rises to c.*)

ROLLO. (*Going close to her*) Don't feel so badly about it. Just keep saying over and over to your-

self—"He does want me—he does—I know he wants me."

GOLDIE. Who, Rollo? (*Lights go on.*)

ROLLO. Why, Shakespeare——

GOLDIE. There they are! I must go. Good-bye, good luck, Rollo! (*Exits.*)

(*Enter HEWSTON with long box, stems protruding from the end. ROLLO goes to dressing-table.*)

HEWSTON. Some flowers for you, sir.

ROLLO. Take them out. Don't bring anything in here until I get out.

HEWSTON. Very good, sir. Would you care to know who they're from?

ROLLO. No.

HEWSTON. I'll just set them outside. (*Puts box outside, entering*) I haven't come across your wig, sir.

ROLLO. I've got it on.

HEWSTON. You're not going to wear your own hair, sir——

ROLLO. Why not? Hamlet wore his own hair, didn't he?

HEWSTON. But he was always referred to as the Melancholy Dane, sir.

ROLLO. Well, can't you be melancholy with light hair?

HEWSTON. I had hoped you were going to take off your mustache, sir.

ROLLO. What for?

HEWSTON. I'm sure Hamlet didn't wear a mustache.

ROLLO. I'm sure he did, and that it was exactly like mine.

(CAMPERDOWN *knocks*. HEWSTON *opens door*.)

CAMPERDOWN. (*Made up as Polonius, with an insinuating look at ROLLO*) Well, how are we feeling this evening?

ROLLO. I'm feeling all right—how are you feeling, Hewston?

HEWSTON. I'm feeling very well, sir.

CAMPERDOWN. (*To ROLLO*) Don't be nervous—after all, it's no more than others have tried to do—and there is always room in the world for one more Hamlet!

ROLLO. Thanks. I hope there'll be more room in the world than there is in this dressing-room.

CAMPERDOWN. I remember the occasion of my first appearance very well. I was in the theatre by three o'clock in the afternoon. Some friends brought me food at about six—a dish of very nice grilled bones and an egg on the side—— Do you think I could eat? I fairly drove them from the room.

ROLLO. How did you do it?

CAMPERDOWN. I understand, Mr. Webster. (*Laughing indulgently.*) I won't wait. Success to you! (*Exits.*)

ROLLO. Thanks. Shut the door and lock it, will you, Hewston?

HEWSTON. I'll shut it, sir, but I can't lock it.

ROLLO. Why not?

HEWSTON. Because there is no key, sir

ROLLO. (*Getting nervous. Crosses to L.*) No key? I never heard of such a thing. How are you supposed to keep the door shut?

HEWSTON. Lean against it, I suppose, sir. Now that I examine it, there's not even a keyhole.

ROLLO. Have it attended to at once. Call somebody——

HEWSTON. I doubt if there's anyone with a keyhole in the house, sir. (*A rap at the door.*)



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"ROLLO'S WILD OAT"

ROLLO. Careful, now! (*Sits chair R.*)

(MRS. PARK-GALES *at the door.*)

MRS. PARK-GALES. Just a moment, please—I must speak to Mr. Webster.

HEWSTON. Mr. Webster is dressing.

MRS. PARK-GALES. Well, can't I just speak to him through a crack in the door? Mr. Webster—it's most important—it's about Miss MacDuff.

ROLLO. (*Anxious, going to door*) What is it? Is anything the matter with her?

MRS. PARK-GALES. I should think so—— (*She enters, made up as Queen.*) It's her hair! Mr. Webster, you must speak to her about it. (MRS. PARK-GALES *carries in her hand a flaxen wig with a few lilies tangled in it.*)

ROLLO. (*Horried at sight of it*) What's that?

MRS. PARK-GALES. This is a very beautiful wig that I wore for years, Mr. Webster. I have offered it to Miss MacDuff, but she has refused it. None too graciously, either. If you know anything about hair, you can see——

ROLLO. I don't. Please take it away—it smells of moth balls!

MRS. PARK-GALES. Oh, that comes right out.

ROLLO. Don't let it come out here—please!

MRS. PARK-GALES. But Miss MacDuff has no hair but her own to wear, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Miss MacDuff is wearing the hair I want her to wear, Mrs. Gales.

MRS. PARK-GALES. But she looks like a soubrette. Will you at least see it before you let her go on with it—unless you have seen her with her hair down. Perhaps you have. (*Insinuatingly.*)

ROLLO. I have not. Ask her to come in here.

MRS. PARK-GALES. I will—and I'll leave this, in case you change your mind. (*Waving the wig.*)

ROLLO. Don't leave it in here, if you value it, Mrs. Gales. Hewston, see that wig out the door——

HEWSTON. Yes, sir.

MRS. PARK-GALES. I'll take it. At least I've done my part—in memory of the Ophelias of better days. (*Ominously*) Success, Mr. Webster! (*Exits with wig. ROLLO backs up to chair at dressing-table. Bumps into it.*)

ROLLO. Damn!

HEWSTON. I'm glad to see you get so excited, sir—you'll give a much better performance.

ROLLO. I'm not excited—but I hate great hanks of hair from God knows whose head—smelling of moth balls.

(*A rap on the door. HEWSTON goes and admits GOLDIE. She wears her Ophelia costume, her hair in braids.*)

ROLLO. Hewston, see if you can find a keyhole.

HEWSTON. Yes, sir. (*Exits.*)

GOLDIE. I heard what she said, Mr. Webster, from my dressing-room. I can't wear my hair any differently, and if you want to get some one else to play the part, you can do so. I will gladly resign——

ROLLO. (*Looking at her with unaffected admiration*) Goldie! How exquisite—how heavenly you look!

GOLDIE. (*Surprised, but finishing what she had come to say*) I have said I didn't want to play it, and I don't.

ROLLO. (*Looking at her hair*) Goldie—can it be possible that it is really yours——

GOLDIE. Of course.

ROLLO. (*Delicately pointing from tip to top of braids*) All the way from here to here. May I take one in my hand? How cool and lovely they are! Are they braids, Goldie?

GOLDIE. No, it's plaited. Do you really like my hair?

ROLLO. Good heavens, my dear—I—I never felt like this about anyone's hair in all my life before. (*Takes braid and kisses it. Then kisses her. GOLDIE submits without a struggle.*) Forgive me, I shouldn't have done that. Will you forgive me?

GOLDIE. (*Crosses R.*) Why, of course, Rollo—it's quite all right. I expected you to.

ROLLO. (*D.R.C.*) You did?

GOLDIE. Yes, they all have. Mr. Stein and—everybody.

ROLLO. (*Starting away angrily*) Well, that doesn't make it any better.

GOLDIE. No, not any better—only I'm used to it.

ROLLO. Goldie! How could you let that man kiss you?

GOLDIE. I didn't. He just did.

ROLLO. (*Bitterly*) Just the way I did, I suppose. What beasts we are! I hadn't any idea that I was going to do it or I'd have led up to it in some way.

GOLDIE. Led up to it?

ROLLO. Yes. You must have noticed, Goldie—you must have realized in these past three weeks—

GOLDIE. Are you leading up to it? Are you going to do it again?

ROLLO. No, I'm not. I wouldn't make you afraid of me for all the world.

GOLDIE. I'm not afraid of you, Rollo.

ROLLO. Aren't you?

GOLDIE. I know that it doesn't mean anything. I'm not the one that you—— It wasn't a serious kiss.

ROLLO. Wasn't it? But it was! That is, it would have been, but you see—so much depends on to-night—I hardly know yet who I am. I may find that I'm just plain Rollo Webster, and I may find that I'm——

GOLDIE. Hamlet!

ROLLO. Yes.

(Enter HEWSTON. Hastily takes Hamlet cloak from behind wardrobe curtain.)

HEWSTON. Better be getting out, sir.

ROLLO. I should say so!

(Exit ROLLO and HEWSTON, HEWSTON carrying cloak. After ROLLO's exit, GOLDIE goes to the dressing-table and looks at herself in the mirror.)

GOLDIE. *(To her reflection)* Why, Goldie Mac-Duff, whatever are you doing in Ophelia's clothes? My poor child, I'm sorry for you—I'm truly sorry.

(Enter HEWSTON excitedly.)

HEWSTON. Don't go, Miss, just for a moment. Something has happened.

GOLDIE. What is it, Hewston?

HEWSTON. Just after Mr. Rollo went on the stage a message came for him. It was delivered to me—it's er—it's about his grandfather.

GOLDIE. What's the matter?

HEWSTON. Why, his grandfather is sick and—Well, here's the message.

GOLDIE. *(Taking the message from him. Reads)* "Come at once, if you ever wish to see your grandfather alive again." What are you going to do, Hewston?

HEWSTON. That's it, Miss. I've sent out front for Mr. Stein—if he wants to do anything, he can.

(Ready to fade out lights end of scene.)

GOLDIE. But Mr. Rollo must be told, Hewston. He must be told immediately.

HEWSTON. I don't see that, Miss. Shakespeare is a solemn occasion—almost as solemn, we might say, as death. It deserves the same respect. I shall not tell him—at least while he's on the stage.

GOLDIE. But you must, Hewston. It may be too late if you wait.

HEWSTON. *(Crossing R.)* I'm sorry you feel this way about it, Miss.

GOLDIE. Oh, but I do—anyone would—— *(STEIN enters. GOLDIE crosses to him c.)* Mr. Stein, Mr. Webster's grandfather is ill and has sent for him. You must stop the performance at once.

STEIN. *(Much excited)* Goldie! You, an actress, to say such a thing!

GOLDIE. His grandfather means far more to him than Hamlet. He would want you to tell him.

STEIN. Is the old man very sick?

GOLDIE. Of course he is—look! *(She shows him the message.)*

STEIN. He can't prevent his grandfather dying. Goldie, even if we told him.

GOLDIE. *(With feeling)* He'll never forgive you—he'll never forgive himself. Think what it will mean to him—that while he was out there playing a part, a *real* person, his own grandfather, was calling for him! Haven't you any feeling? Haven't you any heart?

STEIN. Sure I got a heart—but you got to control your heart, Goldie, in this business.

GOLDIE. Put yourself in his place!

STEIN. I never was a dying grandfather—but if I was one, I don't think I would want to break up a show—on opening night.

GOLDIE. (*Going c., turning to HEWSTON*) And you, Hewston—after all, you're the one who ought to do it. You're the one who has been told to do it. Oh, it's wicked! You must tell him—you must! If you don't, I shall! (*Starts to exit.*)

STEIN. (*Blocking her way*) You! Goldie—have you lost your senses?

GOLDIE. No—I haven't.

STEIN. Don't you know they never deliver a message like this in a theatre? If this was a regular theatre we wouldn't know anything about it!

GOLDIE. I'm glad it isn't, then. Let me go! Nothing—no one can stop me—because I know I'm doing right! (*Exits.*)

CURTAIN

(*Lights out.*)

ACT II

SCENE 2: *Dark change from the preceding scene to stage of the Oddity Theatre.*

Act I, Scene 2. of Hamlet is in progress. The "Room of State in the Castle" is represented by a gray back drop, a platform with two gold chairs and a fur rug. The lighting is odd, but rather interesting. The gold chair section being reddish, indicating the character of the King, and Queen, while a pale lemon light shines on the features of Hamlet.

DISCOVERED: *At rise, KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS and LAERTES.*

KING. *(In continued speech)*

What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES.

Dread my Lord,
Your leave and favor to return to France.
From whence, tho' willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward
France
And bow them to your gracious leave and
pardon.

KING.

Have you your father's leave. What says
Polonius?

POLONIUS.

He hath me Lord, wrung from me me slow
leave

By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed me hard consent;
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING.

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET. (*Aside*)

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING.

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET.

Not so, my Lord; I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN.

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Den-
mark.

Do not forever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou knowst 'tis common; all that live must
die,

Passing thru nature to eternity.

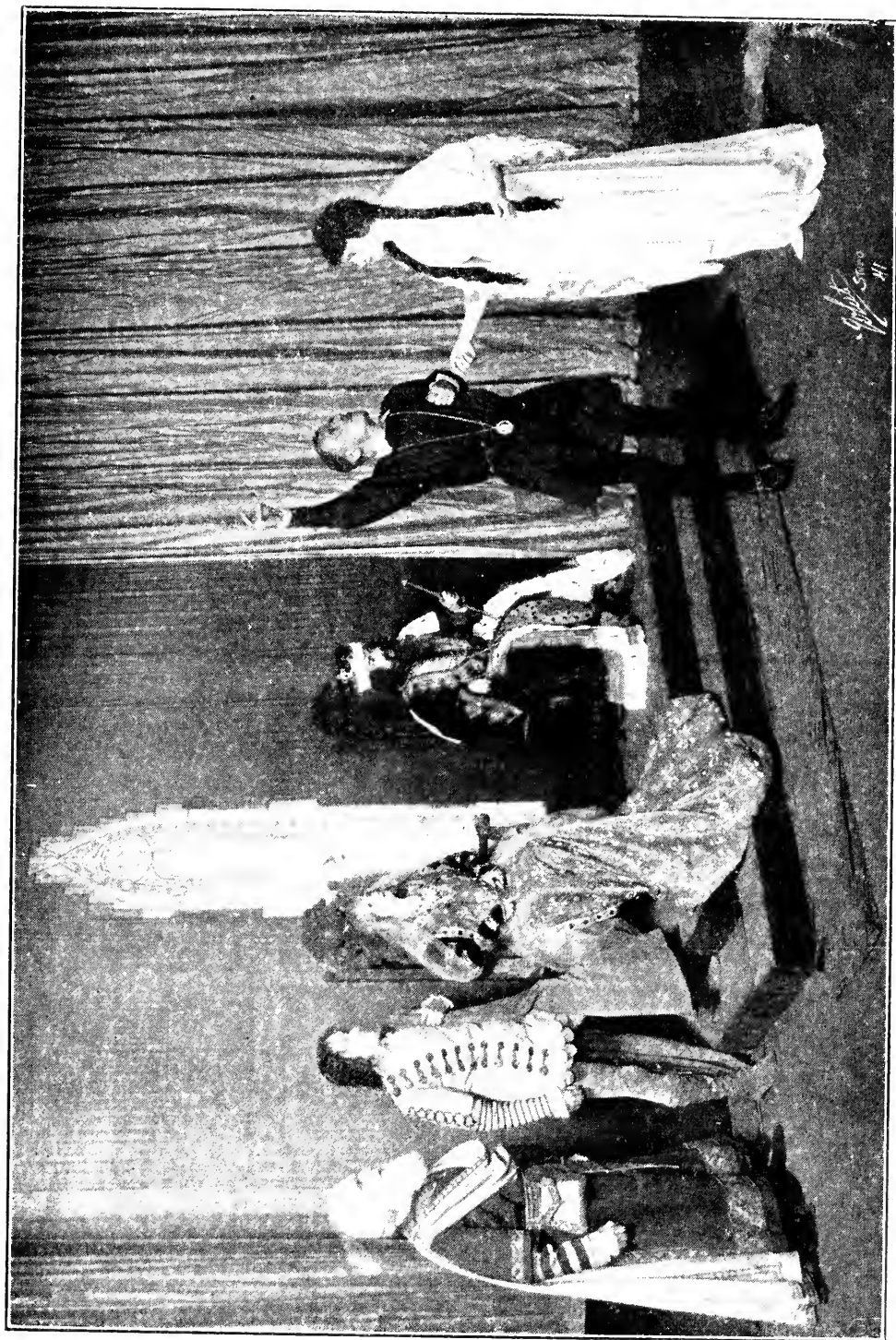
HAMLET. Ay, Madam, it is common.

QUEEN.

If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

(ROLLO, who has intended to play in the simple
modern manner, is by this time infected with
the old-school work of the others, and begins
to sing his lines.)



"ROLLO'S WILD OAT"

HAMLET.

Seems, madam, nay it is, I know not seems.
(*He rises, letting his cloak fall back on seat.*)

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of
grief—

(*GOLDIE enters.*)

GOLDIE. (*Softly*) Rollo!

HAMLET.

That can denote me truly, these indeed seem
For they are actions, that a man might play.

GOLDIE. (*Louder*) Rollo!

HAMLET.

But I have that within, which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING. (*Taking ROLLO'S cue to ignore GOLDIE*)

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature,
Hamlet, to

Give these mourning duties to your father.

GOLDIE. (*Desperately*) Oh, stop—wait—it's
your Grandfather——

HAMLET.

Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,

(*KING and QUEEN rise.*)

HAMLET. Sit down!

(*KING and QUEEN sit.*)

HAMLET.

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self slaughter O, God! God!

GOLDIE. You will forgive me when you hear
what it's about—you must come with me at once.

ROLLO. (*Still trying to save the play. Severely
to GOLDIE*) Begone, girl—art mad before thy time?

GOLDIE. No, no—oh, please—you must believe
me. Your Grandfather—has sent for you—

HAMLET. (*Angrily*) Get thee to a nunnery, and
quickly, too.

GOLDIE. Surely he's more important than all this.

ROLLO. A grandfather is important—even neces-
sary—but there is a time and place for everything.

GOLDIE. But he's ill—very ill—no one else would
tell you.

ROLLO. (*To GOLDIE*) Is this true? Think well
before you speak—for if I leave this scene, my future
hopes are quite, quite—blasted.

GOLDIE. Yes, oh, yes—it's true!

ROLLO. (*In a casual voice*) Then that's the end
of it as far as I'm concerned. (*He walks off the
stage.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I: *The morning room of GRANDFATHER WEBSTER'S house at Shelbrooke.*

An old-fashioned but delightfully furnished room. Door into hall L.U.E. French door leading into garden R.U. Door into other parts of house R.2E. Fireplace L. In front of this a wing chair, facing footlights. On rise HORATIO up L. at bell-cord.

TIME: *A few hours later.*

DISCOVERED: HORATIO WEBSTER and AUNT LANE.

HORATIO. And you suspected nothing? Here the boy was on his way to the devil and you couldn't get the first inkling of it. (*Ringing bell L. Then comes down, sits in armchair.*)

AUNT LANE. If I had suspected anything, I wouldn't have told you, Horatio. (*Seated chair L. of table.*)

HORATIO. Oh, you wouldn't? Why wouldn't you?

AUNT LANE. If you could see your face you wouldn't ask that question.

HORATIO. What's the matter with it? Am I flushed?

AUNT LANE. You certainly are, Horatio—you're angry and you shouldn't be. You've seen cider poured into a glass of milk.

HORATIO. What? Never saw such a thing in my life. What the devil would anyone do that for?

AUNT LANE. That's just what you're doing, Horatio. Your anger sets up just such a fermentation inside of you. All your kindly juices are affected by it.

HORATIO. Fermentation and kindly juices be damned! What's he going to do?—that's what I want to know. Is he going to produce some idiotic damn-foolery with my name on it?

AUNT LANE. No, Horatio. He is not going to play in something he has written. Not at all—not anything like that.

HORATIO. You've kept it all from me—that's what you've done. I have to hear the news from a common servant. "Are you pleased that Mr. Rollo is playing in a theaytre this evening?"—that's the question that's put to me just after my dinner. Pleased! Am I pleased!

AUNT LANE. How did Bella know anything about it? I suppose she's been reading Lydia's letters to me.

HORATIO. And what's Lydia doing all this time? Why doesn't she come home?

AUNT LANE. I've told you, Horatio, she's visiting friends. You ought to be glad to have her—I'd like to go to town oftener myself. It was a great sacrifice for me to stay at home to-night. I wanted to go to a concert with Lydia.

HORATIO. Oh! Well, I'm sorry. Perhaps it might not have been a very good concert.

AUNT LANE. (*Warily*) I don't like your manner, Horatio.

(*Enter BELLA R.*)

BELLA. Did you ring, sir?

HORATIO. I did—long ago. My toe is very bad, Bella. I want you to help me into some room where

I can be alone. I don't care where—if necessary, I can go to bed.

AUNT LANE. (*Rising and going toward door L.*) Don't move, Horatio. If you want your cards they're on the library table. I would advise solitaire, and a hot toddy. You can do as you like. (*Exits with dignity.*)

HORATIO. (*His manner changing. Eagerly to BELLA*) Bella, don't you think it's strange we've heard nothing from Mr. Rollo? Are you sure the boy you gave the message to is reliable?

BELLA. (*Crosses to HORATIO.*) Sure he was, Mr. Webster. He was a sweet young fellow—you could tell from his voice.

HORATIO. What's that got to do with it? You made him write the message down? You're sure he wrote it down?

BELLA. Sure he did, Mr. Webster. I could hear him writing it down as plain as anything.

HORATIO. Nonsense! What was it he said?

BELLA. He said he'd run as fast as ever he could to the theaytre, and I says, "Give the message to Mr. Hewston," just like you told me, "if you can't see Mr. Rollo."

HORATIO. Why doesn't he answer, then? He must have got it by now, mustn't he?

BELLA. How do I know, Mr. Webster? I should think he would. Maybe Mr. Rollo is sick.

HORATIO. I'm afraid not, Bella. I wish I could think so, but I'm afraid not.

BELLA. I hope I won't be punished for what I done—that's all, Mr. Webster. Ten dollars ain't much for committing a deadly sin.

HORATIO. You did it to save Mr. Rollo. It was a very worthy act, and ten dollars was a good price for it. But he thinks only of himself—he won't even come to see his poor old grandfather on his

deathbed. That's gratitude—that's the younger generation for you.

BELLA. But you ain't on your deathbed, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. If I were it would make no difference. Don't idolize your grandchildren, Bella. It's a great mistake. Have nothing to do with them. That's the best way. Send them a dollar occasionally and let it go at that. Don't have them around where you'll see them and get attached to them.

BELLA. No, sir, I'll certainly look out for them, after seeing yours, Mr. Webster—if I have any.

HORATIO. (*Not altogether pleased*) Now that'll do. You go and sit near the telephone where you can hear if he calls.

(*Enter AUNT LANE L. with a pack of cards. Exit BELLA R.*)

AUNT LANE. Here are your cards, Horatio. You seem to endure Bella's society very well. (*Places cards on table. Violent ringing at bell of house door.*) Mercy! Who in the world wants to get into this house enough to ring like that?

HORATIO. (*Excitedly*) Wait! Let me hear! Perhaps, Lane, you'd better go out.

(*Re-enter BELLA hurriedly.*)

BELLA. (*To HORATIO, breathlessly*) The message was delivered, sir, and he is here. Mr. Rollo is here. He run ahead of me into your bedroom. Mr. Rollo, he——

(*Enter ROLLO. He dashes past BELLA into the room and throws himself on his knees beside his grandfather. HORATIO lies back in the chair, pretending faintness. Exit BELLA. AUNT LANE down L. of C.*)

ROLLO. (*Glancing up at AUNT LANE*) Isn't there any hope for him?

AUNT LANE. Hope? Why, Rollo!

HORATIO. (*Weakly, interrupting*) Yes—now that you've come, my boy—now that you've come.

ROLLO. I thought you were dying, Grandfather. (*His head down on HORATIO'S knee.*)

HORATIO. I am, my boy.

AUNT LANE. Dying? Why, your grandfather has no more idea of dying than I have!

HORATIO. (*Explosively*) How do you know what ideas I may have?

ROLLO. You sent for me, and the message was so frightful!

AUNT LANE. Horatio!

ROLLO. Don't! Don't speak to him like that.

HORATIO. No, Lane—don't speak to me like that.

AUNT LANE. Is it possible, Horatio, that you sent for this poor child out of spite?

HORATIO. No, I did not, Lane. You know nothing of my condition.

AUNT LANE. I know that no one could eat such a dinner as you did and be ill.

ROLLO. (*Surprised*) You—you really ate your dinner, Grandfather?

HORATIO. Hardly a mouthful, Rollo. Your Aunt Lane sat behind the centerpiece, the large fernery—she couldn't possibly have seen what I ate.

ROLLO. (*Quiet, but suspicious*) And the doctor? Why isn't the doctor here?

AUNT LANE. We haven't had the doctor, Rollo.

ROLLO. (*Rising*) I begin to see it all.

HORATIO. (*Anxiously*) You don't, my boy.

ROLLO. I do. Perhaps, Aunt Lane, you had better leave us.

AUNT LANE. Rollo, my poor child, come into the library and have a little glass of port and a biscuit before you talk to your grandfather.

ROLLO. No—no.

AUNT LANE. Then let me bring it to you here. Just a little glass of port and a biscuit.

ROLLO. (*Passing her D. of C.*) Oh! You talk to me of port and biscuit! Do you realize what I've done? That I've left my play—my theatre full of people, my manager, my actors—left them all with no excuse for it in the world that I can ever offer! And myself, most of all, I've left myself there in the theatre.

HORATIO. Well spoken, my boy, but that will do.

AUNT LANE. (*Affected but controlling it*) My poor child—remember, Rollo, that nothing is as dreadful or as important as it seems.

(*Exit AUNT LANE R. ROLLO goes up to take off coat. Places it on settee. He is in HAMLET clothes.*)

HORATIO. The first sensible thing I ever heard your Aunt say. Now, my boy, the thing for you to do is to be reasonable. You told me you wanted to go to work.

ROLLO. (*Coming down R. of HORATIO*) I did.

HORATIO. (*He sees the Hamlet costume*) Rollo! What are you doing in those clothes?

ROLLO. These are my working clothes, Grandfather.

HORATIO. What! You are wearing the costume of Hamlet—the Great Dane of Elsinore! (*He rolls the words out.*) My God!

ROLLO. Don't disturb yourself about it, sir—it's past and—it won't occur again.

HORATIO. I should have known—yes, I should have suspected—Hamlet!

ROLLO. Grandfather, did you—did you send that message—just to get me here?

HORATIO. Of course not, my boy—I sent it because I knew—I knew it would kill me if you went on with all that foolishness. If I had known you were playing Hamlet, I promise you, on my word of honor, I would be stone dead as I sit here.

ROLLO. (*Going closer to him*) Do you realize what you have done, Grandfather? But no, I can't believe it. You must be very, very ill!

HORATIO. Certainly, I am. Many a man at my age and in my condition would have his family gathered about his bedside—reading prayers—for those at sea—or something of the sort.

ROLLO. (*Turning and going c. Bitterly*) And you can joke about it!

HORATIO. (*Impatiently*) Well, my boy, you know how it is. In times of stress we—we rise to an occasion. Sickness and death and things like that don't trouble us—not as much as usual.

ROLLO. (*Still and tense*) No one would tell me—they thought the play was more important—all but the girl who was going to play Ophelia. She ran out on the stage—I was just beginning my long speech——

HORATIO. (*With a look of satisfaction*) Stopped you in the beginning, did she?

ROLLO. I never knew how much I cared for you, Grandfather. I left the scene and all the people as if they hadn't been there—but now, I believe you have ruined my life!

HORATIO. No, my dear boy, I have not—you must take my word for it—I have not.

ROLLO. My career as an actor is over. I may be wrong about it—but I believe it is over.

HORATIO. No, I think you are right about that. But do not regret it too much, Rollo. Why, my

boy, I—I wanted to do it when I was your age—all people who have any talent want to do it.

ROLLO. (*With a shred of hope*) You think I have talent?

HORATIO. Why, I have no doubt of it, my boy. You would have probably made an excellent bad actor—just as I would.

BELLA. (*Enter BELLA*) The young lady wants to know if she's to wait, or go home with the cabman?

HORATIO. Young lady! What young lady?

ROLLO. It's Miss MacDuff, Grandfather, the girl who was to play Ophelia.

HORATIO. What, and you brought her with you?

ROLLO. We ran out of the theatre together. I don't know whether she followed me or I dragged her after me——

HORATIO. (*To BELLA*) Tell her to come in here—I wish to see her.

BELLA. Yes, sir.

ROLLO. No, Grandfather. She'll understand your not seeing her.

HORATIO. But I wish to see her.

BELLA. The cabman says it's thirty-five dollars and he wants to know if he's to wait.

HORATIO. Wait? I should say so! Wait forever!

(*Exit BELLA.*)

ROLLO. He drove all the way from the city, Grandfather. When I told him it was a matter of life and death, he said it would be thirty-five dollars.

HORATIO. You told him? A nice way to make a bargain! It's a wonder he hadn't said a hundred and thirty-five!

ROLLO. That's what I thought. Come in, Goldie.

(*As GOLDIE hesitates in the doorway, ROLLO crosses to her.*)

GOLDIE. You sent for me, Rollo?

HORATIO. (*Looking at her keenly*) So . . . it's Ophelia. (*As GOLDIE stands waiting down R., ROLLO beside her*) Rollo, leave me alone with her.

ROLLO. No, Grandfather—I prefer to stay—I won't listen to what you say, but I prefer to remain.

HORATIO. What? You go and pay the cabman. Have you any money on you?

ROLLO. No, sir.

HORATIO. Get it from your Aunt Lane in the library. Tell her to take it out of the housekeeping money.

ROLLO. (*Then going to HORATIO*) Grandfather, not a word to Miss MacDuff that will hurt her feelings or I will leave this house forever.

HORATIO. Leave this room now—that's all I ask of you. I have met this sort of lady before. I know how to treat 'em.

ROLLO. Your actresses were not like Miss MacDuff, sir.

HORATIO. Will you go?

ROLLO. Yes, I will. (*Goes to GOLDIE*) He wants to speak to you alone. Don't mind anything he says. I wouldn't leave you, but when he gets angry he sometimes has a sort of fit.

GOLDIE. What shall I do for him when he has it?

ROLLO. Oh, he won't have it if I go. Don't be afraid of him if he should begin to jump about a little. He can't run very fast—he has a bad toe. (*ROLLO takes GOLDIE to HORATIO*) Grandfather, this is Miss MacDuff—Goldie, this is Grandfather. (*To GOLDIE*) Are you all right? (*GOLDIE nods.* *Exit ROLLO R.*)

HORATION. (*To GOLDIE*) Sit down. (*She does so.*) Are you going to marry my grandson?

GOLDIE. (*Shocked*) Oh, no, no, Mr. Webster! I have no idea of such a thing!

HORATIO. Oh! And are you in the habit of running about the country at night with young men you don't intend to marry?

GOLDIE. No, really. I never did such a thing before. But it was so terrible to be left in the theatre, and we were so worried about you—and the idea of playing Ophelia all by myself was so dreadful——

HORATIO. Why? You've played Ophelia before, haven't you?

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster, never.

HORATIO. Oh! What have you played?

GOLDIE. Why, nothing very much, Mr. Webster. I've been mostly—in musical shows.

HORATIO. Oh, you sing.

GOLDIE. No, I don't.

HORATIO. Don't you have to sing to be in musical shows?

GOLDIE. No. You—you don't.

HORATIO. Oh—well, what are the qualifications necessary?

GOLDIE. Why, different things, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. What in your case?

GOLDIE. Why, I think it was my ankles—mostly.

HORATIO. Oh! And your qualifications for playing Ophelia were the same, I suppose?

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster—I mean, I hadn't any. I was the one all along to—to beg your grandson not to play Hamlet. Not to be an actor at all—to—to take an interest in airbrakes.

HORATIO. Airbrakes? What do you know about airbrakes?

GOLDIE. Nothing—nothing at all—except that they need to be improved.

HORATIO. Who says they do?

GOLDIE. He told me.

HORATIO. Rollo? (GOLDIE *nods.*) Well, he'll be a great help to the business. So he told you that. (*Eyeing her suspiciously*) And a great many other things, I suppose.

GOLDIE. What do you mean, Mr. Webster?

HORATIO. Well, enough to make you think he was a pretty desirable young man. Come, now, didn't he? He told you that he had a large country place.

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster. He told me about this place and the garden—and—you——

HORATIO. I see. And you thought it would be very easy to annex this young gentleman and his possessions——

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster, I didn't.

HORATIO. Well, it might be hard—but a good business stroke.

GOLDIE. (*Rising with dignity, almost weeping*) What I thought doesn't matter, Mr. Webster. And what you may think of me doesn't matter, for I shall not see either you or Rollo—after to-night.

HORATIO. (*Pleased*) There, that's right! I like to see you show some spirit. Now sit right down by me again and tell me——

GOLDIE. No, I must go, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Where are you going?

GOLDIE. I don't know—but before I go I want to tell you that Rollo hasn't the slightest idea of—of what we've been talking about. Of—of me.

HORATIO. What makes you think he hasn't?

GOLDIE. Well, while he may like me, Mr. Webster, I am sure there are others that he likes as well—or better.

HORATIO. Others? What do you mean by that? Actresses?

GOLDIE. I really couldn't tell you—I don't mean anything.

HORATIO. Then I'll have that young rascal in here and make him tell me. Ring the bell!

GOLDIE. No, Mr. Webster—you must promise me first that you won't say one word of what we have been talking about. In the first place, it will make Rollo very angry.

HORATIO. Dear, dear, how terrifying!

GOLDIE. Promise me you won't speak of—of her—and I'll ring the bell.

HORATIO. Certainly I promise. Not a word—just let me get after him. (GOLDIE stops suspiciously.) Just about the airbrakes, my dear—that's all.

(GOLDIE rings the bell L.)

GOLDIE. (On her way to door R.) Good-bye, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Don't go any further than the library.

(Enter BELLA. GOLDIE goes quickly out R.)

BELLA. Did you ring, sir?

HORATIO. Find Mr. Rollo and tell him to come here at once.

BELLA. Yes, sir. The housemaid says she'll leave if he's going to wear those clothes around the house.

HORATIO. You tell her to go to the devil!

BELLA. Yes, sir.

HORATIO. Tell her if she wasn't a drivelling idiot she would know that that is a very beautiful costume—one that many men would die to wear.

BELLA. Yes, sir. I should think they would—

unless someone killed 'em first. (*Exits R., passing above ROLLO, as he enters.*)

(*Enter ROLLO. Crosses L. to HORATIO. Sits R. of HORATIO.*)

ROLLO. Goldie told me, Grandfather, that you wished to speak to me.

HORATIO. So—in addition to everything else, you've been making a damned ass of yourself over women. (*ROLLO puts his head down on his arm. HORATIO is alarmed.*) Rollo, what are you doing? You're not crying!

ROLLO. (*Sitting up*) No, sir.

HORATIO. (*Roughly pulling him over to him*) Don't you know that you're all I care about in the world? Why do you want to disgrace me—raising Cain all over New York City?

ROLLO. I'll admit that I'm an utter failure—and—and I'll go into the business of selling airbrakes at once.

HORATIO. Do you suppose I want an utter failure selling airbrakes? I wouldn't have you in my business.

ROLLO. (*Without spirit*) Perhaps someone will have me, somewhere.

HORATIO. (*Conciliatory*) You're very young, Rollo—but I wouldn't mind your marrying at all if you'd marry someone I wouldn't object to.

ROLLO. Thank you, Grandfather—but I'd mind marrying anyone you wouldn't object to, I'm sure—

HORATIO. No, my boy. Now tell me—is there anyone—have you anyone in mind?

ROLLO. No, sir.

HORATIO. Come, come, my boy, don't say that. I know there is someone.

ROLLO. If you mean Miss MacDuff, she won't have me. I just asked her in the hall.

HORATIO. What the devil did you do that for?

ROLLO. I saw you had been making her cry. Besides—I felt like it. (*Goes to bell L. and rings.*)

HORATIO. That little chorus girl—you asked her to—to marry you?

ROLLO. (*Coming to R. of HORATIO*) She's a wonderful girl, Grandfather. Her Grandmother was the greatest actress in England.

HORATIO. I don't believe it. What was her name?

ROLLO. Her name was Mary Mowe.

HORATIO. Mary Mowe? Rollo—I—I—of all the——

ROLLO. Stop, Grandfather! You shall not say one word against her!

HORATIO. Oh, shan't I?

ROLLO. No, sir—not a word.

HORATIO. How do you know what I was going to say?

ROLLO. I can imagine it was nothing good.

HORATIO. Oh, you can! What right have you to imagine what I was going to say? I daren't mention her name in your presence—is that it?

ROLLO. I know how you hate actresses——

HORATIO. You'll never know now what I was going to say—not if you beg me on your knees.

ROLLO. What was it, Grandfather?

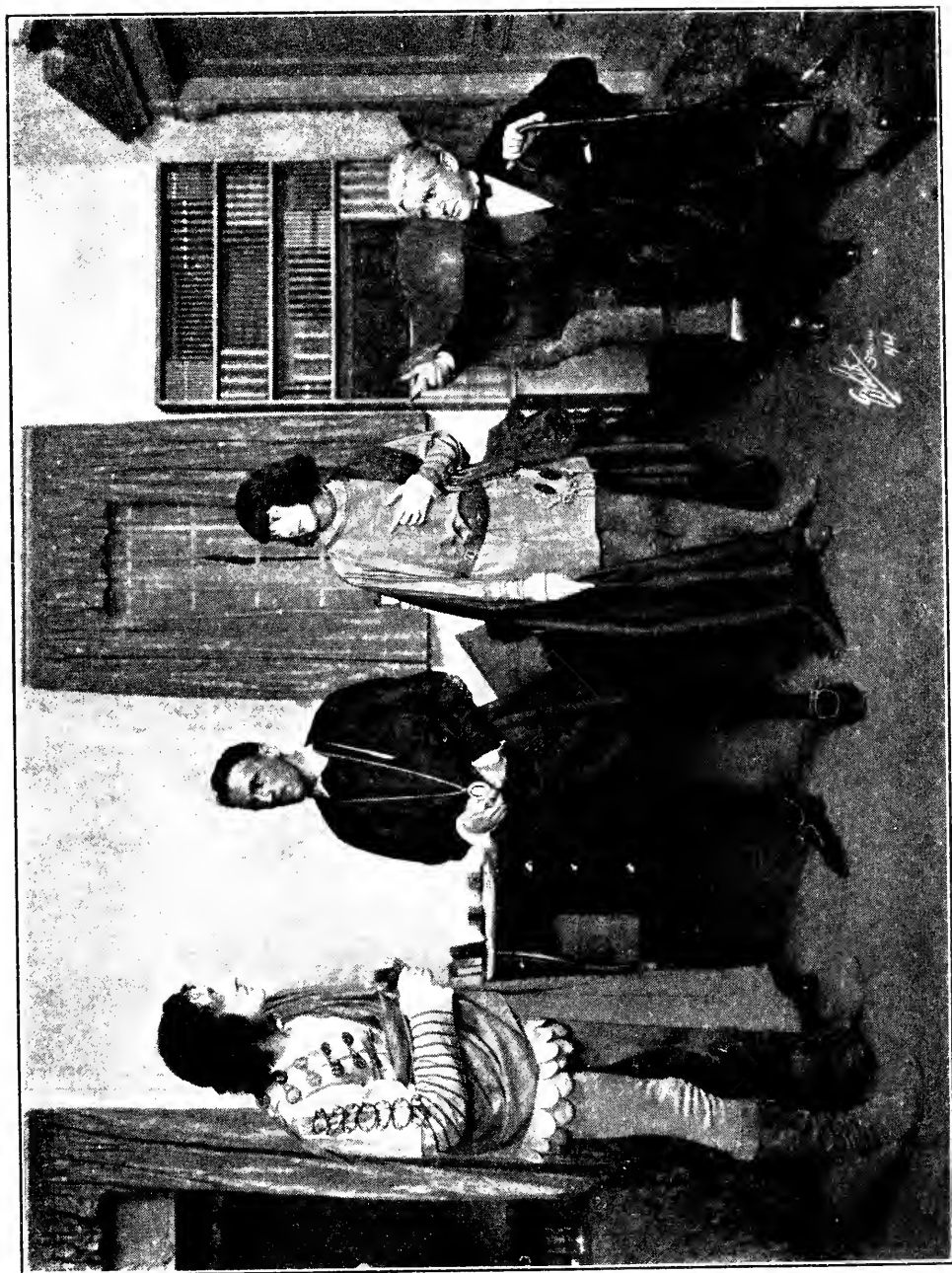
HORATIO. Silence—you have deeply offended me.

ROLLO. I'm very sorry, sir.

HORATIO. That doesn't alter it. (*A violent ringing at the house bell.*) Now who's that at this hour of the night?

ROLLO. (*Listening*) It's Lydia!

LYDIA. (*Off*) Where is he? Let me go to him! (*Rushing in.*) Rollo, you didn't tell me—— Oh,



"ROLLO'S WILD OAT"

my dear, darling Grandfather! (*She kneels by HORATIO, enveloped in her cloak.*)

ROLLO. There's nothing to be excited about, Lyd. He's not sick at all.

LYDIA. Why, what do you mean? I saw the message. Hewston showed it to me.

ROLLO. I know. It was a joke or something.

LYDIA. A joke? But I don't understand.

ROLLO. Why, where's your sense of humor?

LYDIA. You're not sick, Grandfather! But how dreadful!

HORATIO. Oh, dreadful, is it? You'd rather find your old Grandfather on his death-bed than not?

LYDIA. No, no, Grandfather, I only mean I wouldn't have come if I had known. (*She rises. Her cloak falls back, disclosing the Page's costume.*)

HORATIO. Lydia, what have you got on? Did you wear those clothes to the concert?

LYDIA. Doesn't he know? I was in the play, Grandfather. This is my Prologue costume.

HORATIO. Prologue! I should think so. (*To ROLLO.*) And you permitted this?

LYDIA. No, he didn't. I made him let me do it. (*Going to ROLLO. Softly*) Oh, Rollo, what shall I do about Mr. Lucas?

ROLLO. (*Briefly*) Forget him!

LYDIA. But I can't—he's in the cab.

ROLLO. In the cab? Have the driver start for New York as quickly as possible.

(*Enter BELLA with hot toddy which she sets on table.*)

BELLA. The cabman says he won't go back to New York to-night. It's too late and he don't know the detours good enough.

HORATIO. What's that? Another cab?

LYDIA. How did you suppose I came, Grandfather?

ROLLO. How much is it, Lyd?

LYDIA. I don't know.

ROLLO. Oh! Didn't you make a bargain with him?

LYDIA. A bargain! When Grandfather was dying?

HORATIO. Just one more surprise for me now and you can call the doctor, for I shall need him!

(As if in answer to his request, LUCAS stands in the doorway, wearing his Laertes costume.)

ROLLO. Here it is!

LUCAS. I beg your pardon.

HORATIO. Is this the cabman?

LYDIA. *(Falteringly, to LUCAS)* There's nothing the matter with Grandfather at all.

ROLLO. Grandfather, this is Mr. Lucas. He was in the play, too, as you see.

LUCAS. Delighted to meet you, sir, Mr. Webster; and more glad than I can say that there's nothing the matter.

HORATIO. How do you do? Is the entire company here, Rollo? Because if so, you can go on with the play, I should think.

LUCAS. *(To ROLLO, drawing him aside)* I'm in a rather difficult position, Mr. Webster. I haven't a cent in my clothes to pay the cabman.

ROLLO. A cent wouldn't do you very much good. *(Raising his voice)* My Grandfather wouldn't think of allowing you to pay the cabman. *(To HORATIO)* Aunt Lane, Grandfather?

HORATIO. I suppose so. *(Exit ROLLO R. LUCAS crosses L. of table.)* So you brought my granddaughter out here? How did that happen?

LYDIA. (*Going to chair R. of HORATIO. She sits*) I asked him to, Grandfather. Wasn't it dreadful of me?

LUCAS. Not at all. I was glad to be of service in such a serious—I mean—we believed it to be serious—occasion. How did the rumor start?

HORATIO. Rumor—it wasn't a rumor—I was very sick indeed.

LUCAS. Oh, I'm sorry, sir. I didn't understand.

HORATIO. I'm subject to sinking spells and I had one.

LUCAS. (*Sympathetically*) I see. Your heart?

HORATIO. (*Wickedly*) No—my toe. Tell me—how was Rollo getting on?

LYDIA. I thought he was splendid!

LUCAS. Oh, he did very well, Mr. Webster, especially when he was stopped. I mean he had just begun to let himself go. Then, of course, it was terrible for us all. I only thought of myself and how to get off the stage. And when the opportunity came to run out of the theatre, I was delighted, really. Not that I wasn't deeply distressed, at the same time.

(*Enter AUNT LANE. LYDIA crosses quickly to her.*)

AUNT LANE. (*Embracing LYDIA*) Lydia, my dear child! And Mr. Lucas, this is delightful!

HORATIO. Delightful, is it?

AUNT LANE. I had no idea my dull evening was going to turn out like this.

LUCAS. Why, thank you, Miss Lane. It certainly is delightful to see you again, but it seems terrible to intrude upon you like this. And I'm awfully afraid I'll have to ask you to keep me overnight.

AUNT LANE. Why, of course, Mr. Lucas. We wouldn't dream of letting you go. Here's a nice hot drink I've just had made for Mr. Webster; you

must have it. (*As he protests*) Yes, you must! You're so thinly dressed. (AUNT LANE *presses it upon him. He takes the glass reluctantly.*)

LYDIA. Yes, he didn't even have a coat.

LUCAS. I rarely ever wear a coat. But are you sure you won't have this, Mr. Webster? (*Offering the glass to HORATIO.*)

AUNT LANE. No. He wasn't going to drink it, were you, Horatio?

HORATIO. Evidently not.

AUNT LANE. He was quite annoyed with me for making it for him.

ROLLO. (*Enters R. Crosses above the others to HORATIO*) Aunt Lane hasn't the money. It's \$50. Grandfather, but the cabman is willing to stay all night and take a check in the morning.

HORATIO. (*Cries out sharply*) Ah!

LYDIA. Oh, what is it, Grandfather?

AUNT LANE. It's just his toe. Come, let us go into the library. I think it will be pleasanter and your Grandfather likes to be alone, with his toe. Good-night, Horatio.

LYDIA. Good-night, Grandfather.

LUCAS. Good-night, Mr. Webster. (*They go out R. and leave him, LUCAS carrying the toddy.*)

ROLLO. Grandfather, I don't suppose you're going to use the car to-night? I'll get Jonas up and drive to the city, if you've no objections.

HORATIO. Oh! What utter damn foolishness every damn thing I've had on my mind this damn night is!

(ROLLO *rings the bell.*)

ROLLO. Well, at least my damn-foolishness won't disturb you any further, Grandfather. I won't see you again for a long time.

HORATIO. What do you mean by that?

(Enter BELLA R.)

BELLA. Did you ring, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. Bella, ask Miss Lane for a wrap for Miss MacDuff. I'm taking her back to the city to-night.

BELLA. Miss Lane has lent the young lady a nightgown and put her to bed in the room off hers.

ROLLO. Can I stay here to-night, Grandfather?

HORATIO. How dare you ask me that question? You know I never wanted you to go in the first place. And what do you mean by "I won't see you again for a long time"?

ROLLO. It will be much better, Grandfather. I shall never be the same again. I'd just be a gloomy spirit moving through these rooms.

HORATIO. Bella, make a hot drink for Mr. Rollo and one for me, and put them on our night tables. Rollo, my boy, you'll feel entirely different when you get those clothes off. Lay out a bright, cheerful suit of pajamas for Hamlet, Bella. I mean for Mr. Rollo.

ROLLO. (*Sitting sadly in chair L. of table*) That's it, just plain—Rollo—Webster.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 2: *The same, the following morning.*

AT RISE: *Discovered, BELLA and LYDIA. BELLA has a large box. LYDIA is arranging roses in bowl on table c.*

LYDIA. What is it, Bella? (*As BELLA enters L. and crosses to LYDIA.*)

BELLA. It's for Mr. George Lucas, marked "Special."

LYDIA. It's his clothes. You must take it right up to him, Bella. Wait a minute! (*She fastens a rose in the cord.*)

BELLA. Mercy! He'll be glad enough to get 'em without roses, I should think.

LYDIA. Did he seem to enjoy his breakfast, Bella? Did he say anything about my orange marmalade?

BELLA. No, he just swallowed it down. He's too much of a gentleman to complain about anything, I guess.

LYDIA. Complain? Why, except that it's a little burnt, it's the best I ever made. Hurry along, Bella. (*Enter ROLLO L.*) Rollo, his clothes have come. Soon he'll be dressed and speaking to Grandfather.

ROLLO. Who?

LYDIA. George. Mr. Lucas. Oh, Rollo, if you would only tell Grandfather what a splendid man he is!

ROLLO. Why should I? I don't know what a splendid man he is. What's he going to speak to Grandfather about?

LYDIA. About me.

ROLLO. Good heavens, Lyd! He isn't really going to speak to Grandfather seriously, is he?

LYDIA. Of course he is. Why shouldn't he?

ROLLO. Do you think we want you marrying men like that? That you've only known a few minutes? Actors! Bad actors, at that!

LYDIA. He's not a bad actor.

ROLLO. Actors are unkind to their wives, Lyd.

LYDIA. How do you know they are?

ROLLO. I read it somewhere. Lucas will be unkind to his wife. He's just the type. I shouldn't wonder if he killed her.

LYDIA. Why, Rollo, how can you say such things? He has the tenderest heart! And he loves birds and flowers.

ROLLO. Murderers always do. It's a fact. Birds come and sit on their cell windows and they always have an old flower-pot with a blade of grass in it, or something. But it's after they've committed the murder.

LYDIA. Oh, I think you're dreadful, Rollo! You're making fun of a sacred thing—my love for George Lucas.

ROLLO. Your love? Why, Lyd, you dear little soul, you know no more about love . . .

LYDIA. Than you do, I suppose? How about Goldie MacDuff?

ROLLO. Why bring her in? What has she to do with it?

LYDIA. Well, you think you're in love with her, don't you?

ROLLO. Be quiet! Don't go yelling around like that about love. It's disgusting.

LYDIA. Is it? I don't see why your love is any more sacred than mine.

ROLLO. You're impossible! But I'm fond of you—just the same, Lyd. If it hadn't been for me, you'd never have met this objectionable fellow. It's my fault, in a way, and it's up to me to do something about it.

LYDIA. Rollo, if you do, I'll never forgive you—never! I love you now because you've brought this great happiness into my life.

ROLLO. Go easy, dear. I've just finished my breakfast.

LYDIA. If you do anything to separate us——

ROLLO. I won't have to. Grandfather will settle it. Why, Lucas hasn't got a cent.

LYDIA. How do you know he hasn't? He told me he longed for his own place in the hills of Surrey. How can you long for a thing if you haven't got it?

ROLLO. It's the easiest thing in the world.

LYDIA. And he said he loved to ride his horse with the wind blowing in his teeth, or something like that. So he must have a stable. (*Sits in chair L. of table. ROLLO goes to her.*)

ROLLO. The wind will blow in your teeth on a horse from a livery stable just as well, dear. No, you must give him up. Yes, you must. But I'll take you away. We'll go on a trip around the world.

LYDIA. How can we? You haven't any money. You've spent it all on Hamlet.

ROLLO. We'll take yours and go.

LYDIA. We couldn't go around the world on mine.

ROLLO. We could go half-way around and Grandfather would send for us by the time we got to Singapore or some such place.

LYDIA. (*Suspiciously*) Goldie has refused you, I suppose?

ROLLO. (*Sadly*) We won't speak of her, if you don't mind.

LYDIA. (*Sympathetically*) She doesn't know what a darling you are. Shall I tell her?

ROLLO. (*Going u.c.*) No. Here's Grandfather. Do you want to speak to him?

(*Enter HORATIO L.*)

LYDIA. (*Rising, going to garden exit*) No, I don't. Good morning, Grandfather!

HORATIO. Good morning! I am glad to see you attired in something more appropriate than the costume you were wearing last night.

LYDIA. And I'm glad to see you looking more like yourself this morning, Grandfather.

HORATIO. Lydia, where is your hair?

LYDIA. I left it in New York.

HORATIO. You cut it off?

LYDIA. I did it for Shakespeare. (*Cheerfully to ROLLO*) The iris is out. Did you know it?

ROLLO. Yes, I read it in the paper.

LYDIA. I'm going to pick some for Ophelia to take back to the city. (*Exits.*)

HORATIO. Lydia seems very happy this morning.

ROLLO. Yes, I'm afraid she won't be happy long. I feel I ought to tell you, Grandfather. (*HORATIO, sitting at table R., sets up his solitaire.*) Mr. Lucas is going to have a talk with you.

HORATIO. Who is he?

ROLLO. (*Sitting R. of HORATIO*) Why don't you remember last night, Grandfather?

HORATIO. No, I'm trying to forget it.

ROLLO. Mr. Lucas is the gentleman who brought Lydia out. The man in the tan tights.

HORATIO. I don't care to remember him.

ROLLO. But Lydia says a beautiful thing has

come into her life and she means him, and we've got to do something about it.

HORATIO. Have him taken to the train.

ROLLO. We can't do that, Grandfather. If he wants to talk to you, I'm afraid you'll have to listen to him.

HORATIO. I don't see that.

ROLLO. If you refuse, he might run away with her.

HORATIO. Oh, he's that sort, is he?

ROLLO. I don't know anything about him except that it would be terrible to have him around the house, forever reminding us of last night.

HORATIO. Ah, there it is, Rollo. You can't do things without involving others. You went off to the city, and where is it going to end?

(LUCAS stands in the doorway R.)

ROLLO. I hope it is going to end here, Grandfather. Good morning, Mr. Lucas.

LUCAS. Am I intruding?

ROLLO. No, not at all. Grandfather, you remember Mr. Lucas?

HORATIO. Good morning, sir.

LUCAS. Good morning, Mr. Webster. I hope you're feeling better this morning.

HORATIO. I'm feeling as well as can be expected under the circumstances. I understand you wish to speak with me. Is that so?

LUCAS. Why, yes, Mr. Webster. Since you put it that way. I do.

ROLLO. Lydia told me you did. And I told Grandfather.

LUCAS. Where is your sister, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. She's in the garden, waiting for the iris to come out, I believe. I'll leave you. (*Exits L.*)

(HORATIO *continues to play solitaire.*)

LUCAS. (*Crosses to HORATIO*) Yes, Mr. Webster, I did want to see you about something very important. During the weeks we have been thrown together, I have become greatly interested in your granddaughter. This feeling has ripened into something deeper.

HORATIO. Just a moment. (*Placing a card with care.*) Yes, go on.

LUCAS. (*A little embarrassed*) Yes. This feeling has deepened into something riper. I venture to hope that my sentiment is returned, but before assuring myself of this—— (*His eyes on the cards*) Excuse me, Mr. Webster, but you could put that two on the three.

HORATIO. Where?

LUCAS. There. The two of clubs on the three next the queen.

HORATIO. I know it. I don't want to. You've said nothing to my granddaughter?

LUCAS. No, Mr. Webster. Nothing serious. Of course, I saw a good deal of her during rehearsals. And then last night——

HORATIO. I should think so.

LUCAS. Her trouble drew us together. I tried to comfort her, naturally.

HORATIO. But you haven't asked her to marry you?

LUCAS. No, Mr. Webster, I give you my word I have not.

HORATIO. Don't! That's my advice. She's nothing but a child.

LUCAS. I'm perfectly willing to wait, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Don't! I wouldn't give my consent if you waited until she was a hundred.

LUCAS. Oh, you object to me for some reason?

HORATIO. I do. Sit down. You're an actor, and I don't want one in my family.

LUCAS. How about your grandson?

HORATIO. Rollo is not an actor. And he never will be. He has left the stage forever.

LUCAS. I would be perfectly willing to leave the stage forever, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Why would you? Aren't you any good?

LUCAS. Well, I wouldn't say that exactly. But there are other things that interest me far more.

HORATIO. My granddaughter?

LUCAS. Certainly. But I was thinking of something else.

HORATIO. What were you thinking of?

LUCAS. I was thinking of steam pumps.

HORATIO. You don't say? Do you know anything about steam pumps?

LUCAS. There's nothing I don't know about them, Mr. Webster. I made them a special study. My ambition was to be an electrical engineer, but my father wanted me to go on the stage.

HORATIO. What a damned fool!

LUCAS. Yes—dear old man.

HORATIO. Hm! Well, now, I'm very much interested in a steam pump. The Dugdale—perhaps you've heard of it.

LUCAS. No, Mr. Webster. Is it used in England?

HORATIO. No, it isn't. But it ought to be. Lucas, I'd like to get you back in honest work. The theatre isn't honest. There's something wrong with everyone connected with it. Now, how would you like to take my pump to England?

LUCAS. I wouldn't object at all, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. (*Glancing at him, and then looking away*) The trouble is, you don't look like it.

LUCAS. Don't look like a steam pump?

HORATIO. That's it exactly.

LUCAS. You can trust me, Mr. Webster, as an actor, to simulate what I fail naturally to express.

HORATIO. You mean you can act like a steam pump?

LUCAS. I'm sure I can.

HORATIO. Lucas, it's too bad. You're a man of some quality—I can see that—(*Glancing at him.*) But I could never stand it—no, if you go to England in my interests you must never come back—not, at least, until I'm dead.

LUCAS. I understand, Mr. Webster—but you'll let me know, won't you?

HORATIO. I'll tell them at my New York office, 17 Broome Street, that you're connected with us—in a business way.

LUCAS. Certainly, Mr. Webster. I understand. You don't object to my saying good-bye to your granddaughter, Mr. Webster?

HORATIO. Delighted to have you. But don't make it long, you know. The longer you make it the harder it will be for me——

LUCAS. I'll make it very short, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. And you'll take the steam pump over to England?

LUCAS. (*Rising*) It's not romantic, but I will.

HORATIO. (*Rising*) It may not be romantic, but it's solid—it's utilitarian.

LUCAS. (*Smiling*) A steam pump? Oh, come, Mr. Webster. As man to man—I know of nothing so temperamental. Good-bye. (*Shaking hands.*) And I hope I won't come back for years—really I do. (*Exits into garden.*)

HORATIO. Damn it all—there's something to him! That's the worst of it.

(HORATIO *exits* L. *Enter* BELLA and STEIN R.)

BELLA. (*At door*) Just step in here, please. (STEIN *enters*.) Will he know who you are?

STEIN. Oh, yes. He knows me.

BELLA. You haven't any books to sell or something of that kind?

STEIN. No, I'm sorry. But I didn't bring any books with me.

BELLA. He wouldn't have seen you if you had, that's all.

STEIN. (L.) It is young Mr. Webster that I wish to see, you understand. . . .

BELLA. Oh, Mr. Rollo—just a moment.

STEIN. (*Gently*) Did the old man die last night?

BELLA. I don't know. He ain't dead this morning.

(*Exit* BELLA R. *Enter* GOLDIE R. *She is wearing a morning dress of* LYDIA'S.)

GOLDIE. (*Surprised to see him*) Oh, Mr. Stein—I'm so glad to see you. . . .

STEIN. Goldie! So this is where you came when you went.

GOLDIE. (D. R. to STEIN) Yes—you must take me back to the city with you. When are you going?

STEIN. I came to see Mr. Webster. After I see him I expect to go. What are you doing here?

GOLDIE. Oh, I don't know. I ought never to have come.

STEIN. Was you invited?

GOLDIE. No, I wasn't. I came last night with

Mr. Webster. I knew you would be terribly angry with me for breaking up the show—and then I was so worried about—Mr. Webster's grandfather.

STEIN. Oh. Well, I'm through with you for Shakespeare, Goldie—but put on your hat—and I will maybe get you into something—if it is only a railroad train.

GOLDIE. (*Going toward door R.*) Thank you so much, Mr. Stein.

(*Enter ROLLO L. Crosses to GOLDIE at door R.*)

ROLLO. (*Plainly nervous, but controlling himself*) Good morning, Mr. Stein. Good morning, Goldie—I hope you slept well.

GOLDIE. I didn't sleep at all. And I was so frightened when I woke up.

ROLLO. I'm sorry.

GOLDIE. Mr. Stein is going to take me home. But first, I'm to see your Grandfather. He sent this note to me this morning. (*Gives ROLLO note.*)

ROLLO. (*Reading*) "Meet me near the large chair in the sitting room at ten thirty promptly." Do you wish me to be here?

GOLDIE. I don't think your being here would do any good.

ROLLO. Are you afraid of him?

GOLDIE. Not very. Good-bye, Rollo, if I don't see you again.

ROLLO. (*Taking her hand*) Oh! You can say good-bye like that? After all we've been through together?

GOLDIE. Why, there isn't any other way to say good-bye, Rollo, but just to say it, is there?

ROLLO. Sometimes there isn't. (*He drops her hand. GOLDIE goes.*)

STEIN. (*Good-naturedly*) Well, Mr. Webster, how do you feel this morning?

ROLLO. Mr. Stein, if there's anything I can do about last night, just let me know—and I'll do it. I feel worse than you possibly can. I——

STEIN. Have you seen the papers?

ROLLO. No, I had them all destroyed.

STEIN. It don't matter—I have the notices.

ROLLO. I beg that you will spare me, really.

STEIN. But you don't understand, Mr. Webster—the notices are all favorable. (*Taking out paper notices. Sits L. of table c.*) This is Fume—you know how irritable he is—he is crazy about us.

ROLLO. (*R. of table c.*) Just a moment, Mr. Stein. Did the performance go on, after I left?

STEIN. Sure we went on. (*Reads*) "All doubts of the commercial value of Shakespeare were dispelled last night at the Oddity Theatre, where Hamlet was produced by the Rollster Producing Company, Incorporated."

ROLLO. But how could you have gone on after I left?

STEIN. Wait! (*Reads*) "Mr. Rollster appeared in the name part. The indisposition of the young man was noticeable from the first."

ROLLO. Stop—did you say was noticeable from the first?

STEIN. "From the first——"

ROLLO. (*Taking paper*) "From the first——" (*Waving STEIN off as he reads*) "When the impressario announced that he had withdrawn from the cast and asked, 'Is there a Hamlet in the house?' the response was almost unanimous, and a favorable comment on the classical education of our English speaking public." Why, Mr. Stein, this is pure sarcasm—you don't take this seriously——

STEIN. We are taking money at the box office

seriously, Mr. Webster. You haven't come to what was the surprise of the evening. Read it—I like to hear it again.

ROLLO. "The surprise of the evening was Mr. James Hewston, who was found to be in Mr. Rollster's dressing room and perfectly conversant with the role. From the moment he stepped upon the stage the house was in an uproar." (*Looks up in astonishment at STEIN.*) Hewston played the part?

STEIN. (*Rising, goes to ROLLO*) The biggest laughing hit in the world—that's what it is. I will say—that you were not as funny in the part as I thought you would be.

ROLLO. Thanks. What is it you want of me, Mr. Stein—my time is limited.

STEIN. I want you to persuade Hewston to stay in the part. He isn't as pleased as I am over the way it went.

ROLLO. Oh, he's not?

STEIN. You tell him, Rollo, that people always laugh more or less over these old shows—after all, how could anyone that lived as long ago as Shakespeare know what would be funny now?

ROLLO. Where is Hewston?

STEIN. He came on the same train as I did—but he took a walk from the station, I guess. He says he was nervous.

ROLLO. I'll see him when he comes. (*As HORATIO enters door L.*) Grandfather, this is Mr. Stein.

STEIN. I have always wanted to meet you, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Glad to meet you. Sorry, I have a very important engagement this morning.

ROLLO. Would you mind stepping outside a moment?

STEIN. Not at all. Come with me and I will finish telling you. Mrs. Park-Gales was Ophelia and

when she got mad—believe me, it meant something! As for the Queen, you will laugh your head off when I tell you who doubled in the Queen—
(*Exit STEIN and ROLLO.*)

(HORATIO, *looking at his watch, seats himself in the large chair R., expecting GOLDIE. Enter AUNT LANE. HORATIO hears her.*)

HORATIO. (*Thinking it is GOLDIE*) Come here, my dear, and sit by me.

AUNT LANE. (*Crosses to him*) I will, Horatio. I want you to make out a check for the eighty-five dollars I've spent out of my housekeeping money for cabs.

HORATIO. Eighty-five dollars! I thought it was thirty-five.

AUNT LANE. (*Sitting R. of HORATIO*) There were two—the first was thirty-five and the second was fifty.

HORATIO. I'll attend to it later, Lane. I don't wish to be disturbed now.

AUNT LANE. I'm afraid I shall have to disturb you about something else, too, Horatio. Coming through the garden a few minutes ago I saw Lydia and Mr. Lucas on the bench by the iris bed. They were sitting in perfect silence.

HORATIO. Well, what of it? If they couldn't think of anything to say to each other, how else could they sit?

AUNT LANE. It was not because they couldn't think of anything else to say, Horatio. It was because they didn't need to say anything. Besides, he was holding her hand.

HORATIO. I knew it.

AUNT LANE. Yes, I believe she's madly in love with him.

HORATIO. Rubbish! Madly in love—a child like Lydia madly in love!

AUNT LANE. Young girls love very deeply, Horatio. Well, at least, he's very handsome, and we need some handsome men in Shelbrooke. I don't think there's one.

HORATIO. Lane, do be quiet, it's all been attended to, I'm going to send him to England next week.

(Enter LYDIA through French door.)

AUNT LANE. *(Rising, coming down c.)* It's cruel.

LYDIA. Aunt Lane, I'm so happy! I'm so happy, Grandfather! What did you say to him—to Mr. Lucas? He's so happy.

HORATIO. Is he? I'm going to send him to England, my dear. I'm doing it for the best. That's all I can say.

LYDIA. I'm sure you are. But he'll come back. I know he'll come back. I knew it when he said "Goodbye" to me in the garden. He said it so strangely.

HORATIO. *(Irritated by her cheerfulness)* Strangely—oh, yes, of course. Everything to a young girl is strange—it has to be or it wouldn't be interesting——

AUNT LANE. There, Horatio, if it hadn't been for a young girl you wouldn't be in existence.

HORATIO. What do you mean by that?

AUNT LANE. Your mother.

HORATIO. My mother was a sensible woman.

AUNT LANE. *(To LYDIA, sympathetically)* How do you mean, darling, he said "Goodbye" to you strangely? Did he—kiss you?

LYDIA. Oh no—only said—"Darling!"

AUNT LANE. He said, "Darling, goodbye?"

LYDIA. (*Gently correcting her*) "Goodbye, darling."

HORATIO. (*Exasperated*) Be sure you get it right between you. As if it made the slightest difference.

LYDIA. No—nothing makes the slightest difference because he loves me. I shall sit on the garden bench by the iris bed and think of him every day until he comes back. (*LYDIA starts off L.*)

HORATIO. Well, I'm glad she's happy, but I want the garden bench moved away from the iris bed.

AUNT LANE. The garden bench will not be moved, Horatio.

(*Enter GOLDIE R.*)

GOLDIE. (*Surprised to see LYDIA*) Miss Bouton.

LYDIA. I'm not really, I'm his sister.

GOLDIE. His sister!

LYDIA. Goldie, he's such a darling, he told me not to tell you, but he is——

(*Exit LYDIA into garden.*)

AUNT LANE. Miss Bouton was just a joke, we didn't want anyone to know.

HORATIO. Lane, I have an appointment with this young lady. Will you go into the garden?

AUNT LANE. (*To GOLDIE with dignity*) I'll be in the library, my dear, if you should need me.

(*Exit AUNT LANE R.*)

HORATIO. Did I make you cry last night?

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster. Just a little.

HORATIO. I'm sorry. Come here. (*She goes to sit in chair L. of table c.*) No, here. (*She goes to*

chair R. of HORATIO and sits.) I sent for you because I wish to ask you a few questions.

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. Questions, my dear, relating to your grandmother.

GOLDIE. Oh, yes, Mr. Webster.

HORATIO. (*Almost timidly*) Did she—er—did she ever—mention my name?

GOLDIE. What is your name, Mr. Webster?

HORATIO. Horatio! But she always called me "Horry."

GOLDIE. Well, you see I was so young when I left England, but I'm sure she did—to my mother anyway—did you know Grandma when she was playing?

HORATIO. Yes, that was when I knew her. The beautiful Mary Mowe—you have a trace of her—but not much, my dear. Not much.

GOLDIE. Oh, no, I'm not like grandma.

HORATIO. Mary was the most exquisite Ophelia—how I wept over her mad scene.

GOLDIE. You would weep over mine—but it would be for a very different reason, Mr. Webster. I simply can't act—I don't like it—and I can't.

HORATIO. Can't you now? What do you like to do?

GOLDIE. Oh, I don't know, really—I never had time to do anything I like—I love children and flowers and—my sweet-grass sewing basket—I love to sew—and—and put initials on things!

HORATIO. (*Amused*) Do you now. Poor little Mary—but your name isn't Mary.

GOLDIE. Yes, Mr. Webster, it is. They call me Goldie but I was named after Grandma.

HORATIO. Oh, if she had only been more like you.

GOLDIE. Oh, dear—no one ever said that before.

HORATIO. I would have given her all the flowers and children and sewing baskets and initials in the world—but she wouldn't have them.

GOLDIE. Oh, really, Mr. Webster? Was it—that way?

HORATIO. That's the way it was, my dear—if I had waited—everything might have been different.

GOLDIE. I might have been your granddaughter, Mr. Webster—with some little changes.

HORATIO. Yes, that's true. And now history repeats itself—you refuse my grandson. He told me you did—last night—and I couldn't get a word out of him about that lady you gave me to suppose he was interested in.

GOLDIE. Oh, did you speak of her—when you promised me you wouldn't?

HORATIO. Certainly I did. Promises like that are only made to be broken.

(Enter ROLLO U.C. from garden.)

ROLLO. Grandfather—Hewston is here. I think perhaps we'd better see him together.

HORATIO. Why, what has happened to make Hewston so formidable?

ROLLO. Mr. Stein has happened——

GOLDIE. *(Crosses R.C.)* Oh—and I'm going back to town with him.

ROLLO. He's gone.

GOLDIE. If someone would take me to the train?

ROLLO. *(Crosses to her)* Someone will, will you wait for me in the library? *(She hesitates. ROLLO speaks firmly.)* You *will* wait for me in the library!

(Exit GOLDIE.)

ROLLO. *(Crosses to chair R. of HORATIO and*

sits) They want Hewston to continue in the part of Hamlet, Grandfather.

HORATIO. (*Who is pleasantly preoccupied, starts*) Hewston! To continue in what?

ROLLO. It seems he went on and played the part last night—he was very amusing, so they say.

HORATIO. Amusing!

ROLLO. We must try to persuade him not to. Grandfather—they will pay him a lot to do it—but I think we owe it to Shakespeare not to allow our butler to make him a laughing stock.

HORATIO. Why, certainly—we can have him put in an insane asylum without any trouble, I should think. Hewston playing Hamlet!

(*Enter HEWSTON from the garden.*)

HEWSTON. Pardon me, sir. May I come in?

ROLLO. Come in, Hewston—we were expecting you.

HORATIO. What is it you want to do, Hewston?
(*To ROLLO*) Remember you are a witness.

HEWSTON. (*D.R.*) I wish to return to service, sir.

HORATIO. What?

HEWSTON. (*To ROLLO*) I have left everything in order in the studio, sir. I do not wish to stay with anyone connected in any way with the theatre.

ROLLO. Really?

HEWSTON. I am crushed, sir. I have played the greatest part in the world—and during the soliloquy, they laughed at me—they laughed!

HORATIO. (*Unable to restrain himself*) Good—good—— (*ROLLO reproves him with a glance*) I mean horrible, horrible!

HEWSTON. The times have changed, sir. There

is no appreciation of greatness—the stage has been debased.

ROLLO. I'm glad to hear you say so, Hewston.

HEWSTON. I'm through with it—I would like you to give me a reference, sir.

HORATIO. Would you like to come back here, Hewston?

HEWSTON. Yes, sir.

HORATIO. You won't need Hewston, Rollo?

ROLLO. No, sir—I'm going on a trip around the world.

HORATIO. I see. Consider yourself re-engaged and your wages raised to any reasonable figure, Hewston.

HEWSTON. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. (*Starts R. to door.*)

ROLLO. Tell Miss MacDuff I want to speak to her, Hewston.

HEWSTON. Long distance, sir?

ROLLO. No, she's in the library. (*As HEWSTON is about to exit. Crosses to HEWSTON*) Hewston, I feel I ought to thank you for what you did last night.

HEWSTON. I beg that you won't, sir. I'd rather we never referred to the subject again.

ROLLO. I feel the same way myself, Hewston—but we shouldn't. We should learn something—from our experience.

HEWSTON. Yes, sir.

ROLLO. I am beginning to think that Hamlet is a thing to be played in the privacy of one's bedroom. Hewston. We should no more do it before an audience than we should pray before them.

HEWSTON. Perhaps you're right, sir.

ROLLO. Hewston—just one question—what did you wear?

HEWSTON. My father's old Hamlet costume, sir.

I had taken it to the theatre and hung it beside yours.

ROLLO. (*Not pleased*) Oh—you thought you might be called upon.

HEWSTON. No, sir. Just for old times' sake—no, sir—if I had expected to wear it, I would have had it darned.

ROLLO. Oh, Hewston—good Heavens!

HEWSTON. (*Agreeing*) Yes, sir.

ROLLO. I shall try and make it up to you in some other way, Hewston. What have you done with your costume?

HEWSTON. I have laid it away in moth balls, sir.

ROLLO. Lay mine with it. (*He holds out his hand, which HEWSTON takes silently. HEWSTON exits R. ROLLO comes back L. of table.*)

HORATIO. You were so high and mighty with me last night—you never gave me a chance to tell you, Rollo, my actress was Mary's grandmother.

ROLLO. Who is Mary?

HORATIO. Mary is Ophelia.

ROLLO. Grandfather! You don't mean that your actress was my Goldie's grandmother?

HORATIO. No. Your Goldie's grandmother was my actress. Ah, those days in London, Rollo, the happiest days of my life.

ROLLO. (*Interested*) Why didn't you stay there, Grandfather?

HORATIO. Mary wouldn't have me, she wouldn't leave the stage for anybody and I came back to America and married your grandmother. Then Mary relented—wrote me letters, such beautiful letters—but grandma was firm—I never saw her again.

ROLLO. It's awfully sad, Grandfather, if you'd stayed in London I might have been a good actor.

HORATIO. (*Rises and starts toward the French*

door. ROLLO to c.) Yes. If you are going to take a trip around the world, my boy, I suppose you want to see if you can persuade Mary to go with you. Well, I have no objections.

ROLLO. That's too bad, sir, because she has.

HORATIO. Don't give up just because she don't want you. Why, I asked her grandmother at least a hundred times—and I know now that I lost her through my lack of persistence. Persistence, next to brute force, Rollo, is the most important of the virtues in dealing with women. (*As he exits through door L.*) Oh, yes, we get to know these things too late—that's the trouble. (*Exits.*)

(ROLLO up L. Enter GOLDIE.)

GOLDIE. (*To below table c.*) Did you want to speak to me?

ROLLO. (*Severely*) Yes—why didn't you tell me that your name was Mary?

GOLDIE. Why, Mr. Webster? Does it make any difference?

ROLLO. Of course it does. It's my favorite name. You told my grandfather, why keep it from me?

GOLDIE. I'm sorry—I wouldn't have told him, only it came up while we were talking.

ROLLO. He was in love with your grandmother.

GOLDIE. I know it.

ROLLO. He's perfectly willing for me to marry you.

GOLDIE. Oh, is he? Are you sure? Did he say so?

ROLLO. Yes—but what difference does it make? You're not willing. I asked you last night and—and you refused me. If you think I'm going to ask you this morning just because my grandfather is willing, you're mistaken.

GOLDIE. Still I can't help being glad he wouldn't have minded, Mr. Webster.

ROLLO. Why it is "Mr. Webster" this morning? Why the excessive formality—when only last night it was "Rollo" and I was kissing you in my dressing room?

GOLDIE. Oh, Mr. Webster, don't. It seems so awful to speak of such things here.

ROLLO. (*Crosses to her*) Where did you get that dress?

GOLDIE. Lydia lent it to me. It belongs to someone who's coming to spend the week end.

ROLLO. Well, then, I certainly won't be here.

GOLDIE. Do you know who it belongs to?

ROLLO. Yes. I've often played tennis with it. Goldie, listen to me. If you expect me to go on proposing to you—the way my grandfather did to your grandmother—one hundred times that he remembers and probably more that he's forgotten, just put it out of your mind!

GOLDIE. (*Sitting L. of table c.*) Why, Mr. Webster?

ROLLO. Stop calling me that. I ask you now for the last time—making a sum total of two. This will be final, Goldie—I mean it. (*Stopping in fear.*) If you like, I'll wait until you know more of what I'm going to develop into. The Websters are all precisely alike. I'll get my Uncle John Webster to come for a visit and you can look at him—that will be me at middle age and I'll be just like grandfather when I'm seventy. That's all there is to it—take me or leave me. I will not go on with this—(*Stopping miserably.*)

GOLDIE. Will you let me say something?

ROLLO. Yes. Please say it quickly. Just one word.

GOLDIE. I can't.

ROLLO. Two, then.

GOLDIE. No.

ROLLO. Three then, Goldie, is it the right three?

GOLDIE. No—Rollo, I want you to forgive me——

ROLLO. (*Disappointed*) Oh.

GOLDIE. I thought such dreadful things of you—because of the girl I heard singing in your apartment the first day I met you. Now I know it was your sister.

ROLLO. Lydia? She doesn't sing very well, but I'm not responsible for that.

GOLDIE. You must forgive me for what I thought. She was *there*, you see.

ROLLO. So were you?

GOLDIE. I know—but she was there first. And I was so surprised and disappointed—because I thought you were so nice.

ROLLO. I see—you thought she was a wild oat. It doesn't matter. Don't apologize for that.

GOLDIE. Oh, Rollo—I'm so sorry about—Hamlet——

ROLLO. Good Heavens—don't be sorry for Hamlet—be sorry for me.

GOLDIE. (*Her handkerchief to her eyes*) That's what I mean—you care more for him than you do for anybody.

(ROLLO *affected by her tears, bends over her.*)

ROLLO. I don't—I don't. Why, Goldie, I realize now that all the time I was striding through Hamlet, I was really only stumbling along my way to you. (*She sobs softly. He straightens up*) I'll ask you to marry me again when we both feel more like it.

GOLDIE. Will you? I'd like not to be crying when I accept you.

ROLLO. Then we'll go on a long journey—far away from here. We'll borrow your sister's baby so people will think we've been married a long time, and won't annoy us. Wouldn't you like that?

GOLDIE. Yes. But, oh, it would even be more wonderful to stay here in this house and walk in that beautiful garden and feel that it was home.

ROLLO. (*Holding out his hand. GOLDIE rises.*) Oh, well, we can do that, too. It won't take long to walk around the garden, and think about home a little. (*They start for French door, ROLLO's arm about GOLDIE.*)

GOLDIE. Rollo. (*Almost weeping*) I love your grandfather!

ROLLO. Never mind, darling. I love your grandmother! (*They go out the door into garden.*)

CURTAIN

BILLETED.

A comedy in 3 acts, by F. Tennison Jesse and H. Harwood. 4 males, 5 females. One easy interior scene. A charming comedy, constructed with uncommon skill, and abounds with clever lines. Margaret Anglin's big success. Amateurs will find this comedy easy to produce and popular with all audiences. Price, 60 Cents.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

A comedy in 3 acts. By James Montgomery. 5 males, 6 females. Costumes, modern. Two interior scenes. Plays 2½ hours.

Is it possible to tell the absolute truth—even for twenty-four hours? It is—at least Bob Bennett, the hero of "Nothing But the Truth," accomplished the feat. The bet he made with his business partners, and the trouble he got into—with his partners, his friends, and his fiancée—this is the subject of William Collier's tremendous comedy hit. "Nothing But the Truth" can be whole-heartedly recommended as one of the most sprightly, amusing and popular comedies that this country can boast. Price, 60 Cents.

IN WALKED JIMMY.

A comedy in 4 acts, by Minnie Z. Jaffa. 10 males, 2 females (although any number of males and females may be used as clerks, etc.). Two interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours. The thing into which Jimmy walked was a broken-down shoe factory, when the clerks had all been fired, and when the proprietor was in serious contemplation of suicide.

Jimmy, nothing else but plain Jimmy, would have been a mysterious figure had it not been for his matter-of-fact manner, his smile and his everlasting humanness. He put the shoe business on its feet, won the heart of the girl clerk, saved her erring brother from jail, escaped that place as a permanent boarding house himself, and foiled the villain.

Clean, wholesome comedy with just a touch of human nature, just a dash of excitement and more than a little bit of true philosophy make "In Walked Jimmy" one of the most delightful of plays. Jimmy is full of the religion of life, the religion of happiness and the religion of helpfulness, and he so permeates the atmosphere with his "religion" that everyone is happy. The spirit of optimism, good cheer, and hearty laughter dominates the play. There is not a dull moment in any of the four acts. We strongly recommend it.

Price, 60 Cents.

MARTHA BY-THE-DAY.

An optimistic comedy in three acts, by Julie M. Lippmann, author of the "Martha" stories. 5 males, 5 females. Three interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2½ hours.

It is altogether a gentle thing, this play. It is full of quaint humor, old-fashioned, homely sentiment, the kind that people who see the play will recall and chuckle over to-morrow and the next day.

Miss Lippmann has herself adapted her very successful book for stage service, and in doing this has selected from her novel the most telling incidents, infectious comedy and homely sentiment for the play, and the result is thoroughly delightful. Price, 60 Cents.

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DOROTHY'S NEIGHBORS.

A brand new comedy in four acts, by Marie Doran, author of "The New Co-Ed," "Tempest and Sunshine," and many other successful plays. 4 males, 7 females. The scenes are extremely easy to arrange; two plain interiors and one exterior, a garden, or, if necessary, the two interiors will answer. Costumes modern. Plays 2½ hours.

The story is about vocational training, a subject now widely discussed; also, the distribution of large wealth.

Back of the comedy situation and snappy dialogue there is good logic and a sound moral in this pretty play, which is worthy the attention of the experienced amateur. It is a clean, wholesome play, particularly suited to high school production. Price, 30 Cents.

MISS SOMEBODY ELSE.

A modern play in four acts by Marion Short, author of "The Touchdown," etc. 6 males, 10 females. Two interior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

This delightful comedy has gripping dramatic moments, unusual character types, a striking and original plot and is essentially modern in theme and treatment. The story concerns the adventures of Constance Darcy, a multi-millionaire's young daughter. Constance embarks on a trip to find a young man who had been in her father's employ and had stolen a large sum of money. She almost succeeds, when suddenly all traces of the young man are lost. At this point she meets some old friends who are living in almost want and, in order to assist them through motives benevolent, she determines to sink her own aristocratic personality in that of a refined but humble little Irish waitress with the family that are in want. She not only carries her scheme to success in assisting the family, but finds romance and much tense and lively adventure during the period of her incognito, aside from capturing the young man who had defrauded her father. The story is full of bright comedy lines and dramatic situations and is highly recommended for amateur production. This is one of the best comedies we have ever offered with a large number of female characters. The dialogue is bright and the play is full of action from start to finish; not a dull moment in it. This is a great comedy for high schools and colleges, and the wholesome story will please the parents and teachers. We strongly recommend it.

Price, 30 Cents.

PURPLE AND FINE LINEN.

An exceptionally pretty comedy of Puritan New England, in three acts, by Amita B. Fairgrieve and Helena Miller. 9 male, 5 female characters.

This is the Lend A Hand Smith College prize play. It is an admirable play for amateurs, is rich in character portrayal of varied types and is not too difficult while thoroughly pleasing.

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The Touch-Down

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short. 8 males, 6 females, but any number of characters can be introduced in the ensembles. Costumes modern. One interior scene throughout the play. Time, 2½ hours.

This play, written for the use of clever amateurs, is the story of life in Siddell, a Pennsylvania co-educational college. It deals with the vicissitudes and final triumph of the Siddell Football Eleven, and the humorous and dramatic incidents connected therewith.

"The Touch-Down" has the true varsity atmosphere, college songs are sung, and the piece is lively and entertaining throughout. High schools will make no mistake in producing this play. We strongly recommend it as a high-class and well-written comedy.

Price, 30 Cents.

Hurry, Hurry, Hurry

A comedy in three acts, by LeRoy Arnold. 5 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

The story is based on the will of an eccentric aunt. It stipulates that her pretty niece must be affianced before she is twenty-one, and married to her fiancé within a year, if she is to get her spinster relative's million. Father has nice notions of honor and fails to tell daughter about the will, so that she may make her choice untrammeled by any other consideration than that of true love. The action all takes place in the evening the midnight of which will see her reach twenty-one. Time is therefore short, and it is hurry, hurry, hurry, if she is to become engaged and thus save her father from impending bankruptcy.

The situations are intrinsically funny and the dialogue is sprightly. The characters are natural and unaffected and the action moves with a snap such as should be expected from its title.

Price, 30 Cents.

The Varsity Coach

A three-act play of college life, by Marion Short, specially adapted for performance by amateurs or high school students. 5 males 6 females, but any number of boys and girls may be introduced in the action of the play. Two settings necessary, a college boy's room and the university campus. Time, about 2 hours.

Like many another college boy, "Bob" Selby, an all round popular college man, becomes possessed of the idea that athletic prowess is more to be desired than scholarship. He is surprised in the midst of a "spread" in his room in Regatta week by a visit from his aunt who is putting him through college. Aunt Serena, "a lady of the old school and the dearest little woman in the whole world," has hastened to make this visit to her adored nephew under the mistaken impression that he is about to receive the Fellows prize for scholarship. Her grief and chagrin when she learns that instead of the prize Robert has received "a pink card," which is equivalent to suspension for poor scholarship, gives a touch of pathos to an otherwise jolly comedy of college life. How the repentant Robert more than redeems himself, carries off honors at the last, and in the end wins Ruth, the faithful little sweetheart of the "Prom" and the classroom, makes a story of dramatic interest and brings out very clearly certain phases of modern college life. There are several opportunities for the introduction of college songs and "stunts."

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